

SPECIAL STONEWALL DOUBLE ISSUE

GAY COMMUNITY NEWS

now

and

**25 Years Later:
Debating the "Gay Moment"**

**Vaid, Ettelbrick, Rofes,
Cerullo, Bronski, V.K. Aruna,
Pincus...**

then

GCN Resumes Regular Publication

With this issue, *Gay Community News*, the paper of record for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, has at last resumed regular publication. And we invite YOU to become a part of it!

Since suspending publication in July of 1992 due to mounting financial problems, GCN has undergone an exciting transformation. Over the past two years, a group of dedicated volunteers has worked to revitalize and remake the paper. And now GCN—THE newspaper of progressive analysis and commentary—is back.

The new GCN provides an unabashedly political forum for queers to debate the myriad issues that we face. As always, the paper encourages debate, values irreverent commentary, and seeks to give voice to those denied visibility. GCN's commitment to feminism and racial, social and economic justice is a commitment to ourselves as a community.

Who else can you count on to:

- cover gay activism in Chiapas, Mexico
- report on Asian lesbians organizing in the U.S.
- debunk the polls done to promote "gay marketing"
- examine how racism within the gay community feeds the Right's homophobic attacks
- feature the voices of gay and lesbian youth
- take a look at the "queers are no big deal" trend in T.V. and movies

plus bring you the sharpest, sexiest coverage of books, theater, and cultural events?

We need GCN more than ever as THE forum for our progressive movement. As we resume publication our development committee is working hard to retire the remaining debt, solicit individual donations, and secure a variety of grants. While we have made dramatic progress at putting the paper on sound financial footing, we won't survive without sustained community support. We need contributions of every size, from \$35.00 for a year's subscription to large gifts that will underwrite this vital community resource.

GCN will be published on a quarterly basis for the remainder of 1994. In 1995 we will begin monthly publication. WE NEED YOU TO SUBSCRIBE NOW! For \$35.00, you will receive the best in queer commentary in ten fantastic issues over the next year. Your subscription supports the effort to resume full staffing levels as soon as possible.

You won't want to miss a single issue of the new GCN. So come on back to your community paper. Join us as a writer, contributor, subscriber, dissident or all of these. GCN also makes a great gift—to a friend, your local library, or your school.

We thank you in advance for your renewed, or new, involvement in GCN. In these times we need the paper and each other like never before. Your involvement is vital, and it's our future.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors
Bromfield Street Educational Foundation

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Prisoner Project Update

GCN HAS BEEN UNDERGOING A PERIOD OF RESTRUCTURING during the last two years; we have examined our financial structure, our format, and, of course, our purpose and goals. While much will change as the paper begins anew, our commitment to a radical vision for transforming our society and culture remains. During the reorganizing period, we drafted a new mission statement, affirming that GCN exists to challenge "assumptions both in and outside gay communities, providing critical coverage of politics, economics, health care, and other social and cultural issues. In GCN, we seek a forum, not only to challenge one another, but to celebrate, affirm, and share our differences."

In creating such a forum, The Lesbian and Gay Prisoner Project can play a critical part. The Project, founded by GCN staff member, Mike Riegler has been an attempt to widen the context of gay/lesbian liberation. Participants in the Prisoner Project, whether prisoners or people on the outside, believe there is a connection between the forces in a society that incarcerate people believed to be "criminals" and that criminalize behavior deemed to be unacceptable. We are particularly concerned about lesbians and gay men in prison, but we also focus our attention on all prisoners because we know the "justice" system is unjust, and that any of us could end up in prison should our economic situation shift, or if we should happen to challenge authority one day in the wrong place, at the wrong time.

Over the years, the Prisoner Project has primarily served to link gay and lesbian prisoners with the wider gay and lesbian community. Through letters to the editor in GCN, a "Freedom's Just" column about prison issues, prison news coverage, penpal ads, and informational packets sent to prisoners, the Project's aim has been to make visible the humanity and the concerns of gay people in prison; to provide prisoners with needed information about gay and lesbian history, AIDS and safer sex, transsexuality, coming out, and getting out (of prison); and we've tried to encourage the activism of prisoners for their own liberation, sexual and otherwise.

In addition, the Project has aimed to challenge the prison system's arbitrary rules and regulations concerning censorship of gay and lesbian literature, visitation by lesbian and gay partners of people in prison, HIV treatment and policies, and discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The Project has also been the impetus behind the inclusion of prison and criminal justice issues in GCN's regular news and feature coverage. For example, in 1987 GCN published a special supplement on lesbians in prison, and GCN was the first national newspaper to take an in-depth look at AIDS in prison, in 1988. The paper has frequently published the writing of people in prison, including an annual prisoner poetry and art supplement.

GAY COMMUNITY NEWS

SPRING/SUMMER 1994 ISSUE

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Ray Hopkins

This issue of *Gay Community News* is dedicated to Ray Hopkins, who died from complications due to AIDS on May 26 of this year.

Ray worked in Boston for Teradyne and taught for many years at Roxbury Community College. He was an AIDS and Gay activist in Boston and on Cape Cod, where he lived for most of the year. In 1979, Ray was a founding member of LAGMA (Lesbian and Gay Media Advocates) and was an active member of The Speakers Bureau and the Cape Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Issues and Concerns. He co-authored the book, *Talk Back*, a primer on dealing with the media around gay and lesbian issues, and co-developed *A Gay Person's Guide to New England*.

Ray was a stalwart GCNer from the earliest days on Bromfield Street, when he served on the paper's staff and board. To the many Friday night "stuffers" who volunteered to mail out the paper each week, Ray was the efficient co-ordinator of stuffing, labelling, and bundling; welcoming anyone interested in helping out and sustaining all with pizza and soda.

Over time, in different organizations, leaders, volunteers, staff, and boards came and went. Ray proved to be the constant for them all, getting out the work and providing the thread of history for almost twenty years.

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photo: Fred McDarrah

GAY PRIDE: PHOTOGRAPHS FROM STONEWALL TO TODAY

by Fred W. McDarrah and Timothy S. McDarrah

a cappella books, Chicago. 188pp \$20, paper

by Gordon Gottlieb

AS CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER for the Village Voice since 1959, Fred McDarrah has been in a unique position to chronicle New York City's gay (and to a lesser extent lesbian) community since before Stonewall. At the urging of his son, he has assembled an impressive array of photographs to celebrate 25 years of gay/lesbian pride.

The most vibrant and evocative images are the ones from the early days—a dozen gay men, triumphantly reveling in a campy post-riot glow; longhaired and afro-ed men and women holding banners advocating liberation (not just rights); boozing at the GAA Firehouse. Lots of familiar faces peer out at us (from W. H. Auden to Charles Ludlum), as do the less known but equally vital—members of Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries or STAR, for instance. Somewhat incongruous is a short chapter devoted to Andy Warhol's clique. Final chapters present images from more recent events—AIDS demos, the national march in Washington, scenes from San Francisco taken by local photographer RINK.

In addition to introductions by Allen Ginsberg and Jill Johnston, Robert Taylor has prepared a historical essay to accompany the pictures. Once again, the earlier entries convey a sense of immediacy, the grittiness and the passion comes through a little stronger. By the time Taylor gets to chronicling broader policy issues (the military, AIDS, rights legislation), we move beyond the New York City neighborhoods that have served up a heady brew of politics and passion, and interest wanes a bit.

From *The Ladder*, October/November 1969

GAY POWER IN NEW YORK CITY: Gay power—social and political power for homosexuals—has become a reality in New York, with the inadvertent help of the Police Department. At about 2 A.M., late Saturday night of June 29, the police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar at 53 Christopher St. in Greenwich Village. They had previously closed the Sewer and The Checkerboard, also gay bars within the territory of the Sixth Precinct, but this was the first raid during peak hours, when the bar was jammed.

The raid touched off a riot by approximately 400 homosexual men and women, who yelled "gay power" and threw pennies, garbage and even uprooted parking meters at the police. An unknown number of homosexuals were injured. Four policemen were sent to the hospital, one with a broken wrist. Several homosexuals, who claim that they were suddenly attacked from behind while passing through the area, are suing the Police Department for assault and battery.

Homosexuals continued to riot on the streets of Greenwich Village on Sunday night, June 29, and on Wednesday, July 2nd. Both the Mattachine Society of New York and the Homophile Youth Movement began leafletting the Village in order to organize protest against the conditions which sparked the riots.

GAY LIBERATION MEETINGS: On July 9th, the Mattachine Society of New York held a meeting at Freedom House, to discuss the possibilities for protest action against the police raids and corruption in the State Liquor Authority. Dick Leitsch reported on the riots and then opened the meeting to suggestions. One young man reported that police were still harassing homosexuals in the Village, picking them off the streets and beating them up in police cars. He stated that many young runaways, homeless youths who happen also to be homosexual, were especially vulnerable to these attacks, and he requested help in establishing halfway houses or a coffee shop for these youngsters. Madolyn Cervantes suggested that a strong campaign to end corruption in the SLA be launched.

Martha Shelley, of the NY chapter of Daughters of Bilitis, suggested a gay power rally; this suggestion was adopted.

THE GAY POWER VIGIL: July 27, 1969 Martha Shelley stood up on the rim of the fountain and complimented the hundreds who were already gathered, wearing lavender armbands, for their courage in showing up at an open meeting. "The time has come for us to walk in the sunshine. We don't have to ask permission to do it. Here we are!" "We will no longer be victimized by straight people who are guilt-ridden about sex. We don't need to be told we're sick—man, if I'm sick, I know where it hurts and I go to a doctor. If I'm happily making love, I don't want a doctor to come to me and say, 'you're sick!'" She also denounced the vigilantes who had been harassing homosexuals in a park in Queens. "Why do you think they ran around at one in the morning with flashlights to chase people out of there? To protect their children—or to get a free peep show?"

Marty Robinson of the Mattachine Society spoke about the potential of gay power. He urged homosexuals to petition their government, to organize into voting blocs, and to use the power of the boycott. "There are one million homosexuals in NYC. If we wanted to, we could boycott Bloomingdale's, and that store would be closed in two weeks." He asked those present to join with groups such as the Mattachine Society and the D.O.B. in order to continue the fight for equality. "We will not permit

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WE WANT (ONE OF) OUR RIGHTS AND WE DON'T CARE HOW:

An Interview with Paula Ettelbrick

In May, GCN had the opportunity to interview Paula Ettelbrick, Director of Public Policy for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, NYC office. Paula is a former Legal Director for Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund; she has been involved in national lesbian and gay legal work for the last 8 years.

History

GCN: Can you explain how the national gay and lesbian civil rights bill came to be?

PE: For well over a decade there has been some form of a bill to add sexual orientation to existing federal law. It was introduced every year, but we never had an organized national push for it. About a year and a half ago, some people in Washington began to talk about drafting an independent bill to take account of the fact that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is very different than discrimination based on race or sex or religion.

I got involved when I was still legal director at Lambda; Tom Stoddard who had recently left Lambda and I were the only "out of towners" who were invited to a little gathering to draft the bill. It was mostly Washington-based people, and, though there were a lot of lawyers, none of them had done any lesbian or gay litigation, except Tom, and me and Matt Coles, a fabulous litigator from Northern California ACLU who was on conference call.

We started in February of 1993. We decided we wanted a free-standing bill because we didn't want to open up Title VII and other civil rights legislation for Congress to mess around with race and sex discrimination.

Drafting the Bill: Religious Exemption

The drafting process has basically been kept as a Washington thing. The gay and lesbian community has no independent political power there whatsoever. Our national organizations, though they work their hearts out, have no power in the political landscape in Washington without the involvement of the broader civil rights community. The Leadership Conference for Civil Rights [LCCR] is the mainstay group; if you don't have them behind you, you can't get anything through the Congress. Unfortunately, they're a coalition that includes the Catholic Church, and a lot of other religious groups—as well as the women's groups and the NAACP, and all the other civil rights groups. Thus, we were basically writing this bill for the LCCR; we had to get them on board to push it forward. Immediately, we got into discussions about exempting religious organizations and institutions; with the Catholic Church and other religious groups playing such a huge role in the LCCR, there was no other way. And that was a huge struggle in drafting the bill. Some of us, mostly those outside Washington, were adamant in saying that the Right was decimating our community—look at what they are doing in states around the country. It was unbelievable that we should exempt the Religious Right and then go to our communities and say, "Please support this bill, but you should know, we've just exempted religious organizations, and they can discriminate against us under this law."

Another struggle was, do we draft a bill with the exemption in, or do we let it come in later in the process? I was fully aware that religious groups were going to be allowed to discriminate only on the basis of sexual orientation. But I had real trouble with having our hands on that portion of the bill. And I lost.

The gay and lesbian community has very little say on anything to do with this bill. Right now, it's down to



the wire, and it's really what the staff people in some of the Congresspeople's offices think it should be. My big fear is that we've whittled away so much of the bill that we have no room to negotiate. Call me naive, but it never occurs to me to go into a process, having already given everything away, because then where do you negotiate?

Employment Only

GCN: Did people come in with a different scope for what the bill would look like?

PE: Up until two months ago, we had drafted a full civil rights bill that would ban discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations—those are the three big areas. That was what we wanted. We struggled over religious exemption, we struggled over other aspects of the bill like equal benefits in employment, but we intended a full civil rights bill. Suddenly, two months ago, it became an employment only bill, because that's politically expedient, because that's what people think will pass, because that's what the staffers in Washington are pushing.

GCN: Wasn't there an issue about which committee the bill would go to?

PE: Yes, Senator Kennedy [D-MA] will be the prime sponsor in the Senate, and if it's an employment-only bill, it goes to his Labor Committee, which is good for us. He is very dedicated to ensuring that we get this bill submitted and that we have full hearings aired on

C-Span just like they did on gays in the military. We need to try to undo some of the damage in the public view about who gay people are, to undo Sam Nunn's military hearings. So there's a powerful political reason to narrow the scope of the bill if we want to use it as an educational forum, a national forum, to talk about discrimination against lesbians and gay men. On the other hand, I'm a long-terminer in this movement. I don't need instant gratification; and I would rather have a full civil rights bill, and go in with our principles and really force members of Congress to take a stand. This movement has been around for a long time, it started well before Stonewall, and it's time. We need a sense of entitlement and the political motivation to push for that. If it takes four or five years, that's a pretty short time. Massachusetts took 17 years to get a state-wide civil rights law; New York City took 16 years to get a city ordinance.

GCN: And, had it been a full-scale civil rights bill it wouldn't have gone to Kennedy's committee?

PE: It would have gone to the Judiciary Committee, which is Sen. Biden's [D-DE] Committee, where I'm not so sure it would move; we probably wouldn't get hearings, and we wouldn't have the same freedom to push for the public airing of discrimination against the lesbian and gay communities. To the extent that the Right is organizing against us around basic civil rights, a win on the employment issue could take some of the boom out of their strategy to make us second-class citizens.

Though I think employment is the place people feel most vulnerable, I have other concerns from years of working on legal issues, and particularly representing lesbians, who have to take their kids to day care centers. When the center says, "I'm really sorry. I don't think your child is going to fit in here," an employment law won't help. We need a public accommodations law that says day care centers can't discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. Women, I think, relate to public institutions, public accommodations, schools, etc. in a different way, a more personal way, where you have to come out to get the service. Not that gay men don't, but statistically it's more of an issue for lesbians. Who I represent is not being heard in this process; yet, employment is obviously an important issue to lesbians.

GCN: Could you take it to another level and ask what does it really mean to ensure that job discrimination can't happen? Even when you have an employment law, as we do with the more comprehensive Massachusetts civil rights bill, it's the exception for teachers, day care workers to be out at work.

PE: What we have to keep in mind is that these laws do not prevent discrimination; they give you a remedy when it happens. It's a symbolic gesture, a public policy statement by the state or local government that says, "We're not going to condone discrimination." But it doesn't prevent it. It does begin to change the way people are treated, and employers have to get their acts together; or in the more cynical view, they have to learn how to get around the law by not being so obvious about their discrimination.

A federal bill, even if it's employment only, will help the coming out process for people in states that will never see the light of a state civil rights law. When you know you have a remedy, when you know you have federal courts to go to, when you know you have a national statement against discrimination, people feel a little less vulnerable; they will know they have the force of federal law behind them. That may not feel like a big deal, and it's going to be a process—people won't just come running out of the closet in Mississippi if they're not already out—but there will be some progress down the road.

Mobilizing for Civil Rights

GCN: Do the gay/lesbian national organizations have a strategy to mobilize support for the bill?

PE: Part of the problem with the process so far is that I don't think our national groups have checked in with activists on the state or local level. I think people are going to be pissed off to discover it's an employment-only bill. Local and state groups are already going forward with full civil rights bills. In New York, the Empire State Pride Agenda, our statewide lesbian and gay group is upset about this, because we are close to getting a statewide bill. They are afraid we're suggesting to state legislators that they can get away with just doing employment, not deal with housing, public accommodations, businesses, credit institutions, and what have you. The last thing we need is for some NY state senators to say, we don't have to do a full bill, we can just deal with employment.

Some in Washington don't get that, because they're not in touch with people in the communities. They're feeling very burned by the military fiasco. Many have argued that the military was a very different issue. It was never a grassroots issue, you never had people organizing in states to overturn the ban on gays in the military the way people have been organizing for years in cities and states all around the country for full civil rights. In addition, people were conflicted about the military. You had more left and progressive people saying, like the t-shirt did in Washington, "The problem isn't gay soldiers, it's dead soldiers." Why should we send people in our communities to fight in the Persian Gulf, etc. There is not the same political ambivalence about civil rights; we are all in agreement that there should be federal, state, and city laws that ban discrimination. Some Washington insiders don't see the distinction. They see that people didn't come to the party on the military issue, didn't lobby their Congresspeople, that we were outdone by the Radical Right on that, and they're fearful that the same thing is going to happen. I fear in some ways we've sunk our own ship, by going with a narrower bill that's not going to motivate people in the same way that standing up and saying "We deserve equal treatment across the board" empowers people.

But, I want to reiterate, from another perspective, the chance to have the bill in Kennedy's committee, the chance to have a public airing and to hear from gay and lesbian people who have been discriminated against, and to make sure the public spokespersons are not all white gay male bankers who've lost their jobs, to frame and form those hearings, is also powerful.

GCN: Given the issue of who will testify at such hearings, do you have information about how discrimination comes down in terms of gender, race, class?

PE: A few of us are trying to uncover some of the stories of discrimination that might be most compelling. Even though we may get our day in the sun in the US Congress, there will only be a few individuals who will actually be able to testify, maybe 8, maybe 10; so, it's really a matter of culling down and finding both the most egregious forms of discrimination, but also finding those cases that are going to reveal the intersections of discriminations. Most lesbians who are discriminated against can't really tell where the homophobia begins and the sexism ends; or vice versa. Or for people of color, it's the same thing: what part of this is racism, what part homophobia, what part class? We have so segregated our view of protection under the law that judges, and even lawyers, don't know how to integrate the issues. So I plan to bring cases forward that talk about the intersections. For example, there are cases where a lesbian is harassed on her job, and the courts try to make a fine distinction between sexual harassment and sexual

orientation harassment because they can't see that if she's called a dyke or a bulldyke, that's about homophobia and sexism; she may be challenging gender roles, she may not be the good little femme gal the employer wanted to hire. Sometimes through the civil rights process, we categorize these issues in a way that has them as almost separate entities. I think the most powerful spokespersons are going to be lesbians of color, who are going to be able to talk to the US Congress and the American public, who are going to be able to get feminists on board to understand how homophobia intersects with sexism, to get people of color communities on board in opposition to the Radical Right's incursion into the civil rights debate. At this point, it's a matter of contacting folks, starting with the Human Rights Commissions and, contacting community groups. The problem is that you really want cases from states in which there are no laws, no protections, where people have nowhere to go to complain about discrimination. It's hard to find those cases.

The Task Force, e.g., does very fine organizing work, they have a great staff, but they don't have the resources to mobilize the entire country. HRCF is not a grassroots organization; they're a PAC and a lobbying group, so they're not out there organizing folks, even though they have their dinners and those are prime organizing opportunities.

GCN: Isn't there any clearinghouse of national information on job discrimination?

PE: To some extent, local groups do that. At Lambda Legal, we kept a record on all "intake" calls and in the past, when we've gotten calls from some state trying to get a gay rights law passed, we've gone through those calls to try to locate particular cases from those states. But, it's very piecemeal. My job now, is to try to find cases from all the places in which this information is compiled. In New York City, for instance, the city Human Rights Commission began years before the city ordinance was passed in 1986 collecting data and issuing annual reports. Even though they couldn't do anything about it, they took complaints based on sexual orientation discrimination, and collected that data. Recently, we met with the Attorney General of New York to ask what they could do to collect such information, something that would be very helpful in trying to get a statewide law. There's ultimately no other way than doing articles like this and asking people to report their experiences.

GCN: Can economists help here, documenting the occupational spread of the gl/bi community, to counter the notion that we all have high disposable income, and represent a narrow (upper) band of the class structure?

PE: Yes, we have to counter this horrible thing. Look at all the surveys that purport to show the median income of gay and lesbian people at \$55,000, or whatever—I wish! It's almost like consumerism has overtaken us, and we're looking to buy our freedom, as if money could do this. We poured millions into the Clinton campaign—for what? Was there a political vision behind it? We won't even hold this man's feet to the fire over gays in the military. What good is pouring in our money, or showing our financial affluence, if there's no political vision behind it? We have the class range in our community that doesn't often exist in other constituency-based movements. Certainly not in the Black civil rights movement. Or among women, who may be wealthy and privileged due to their husband's money or father's money, but don't have that power on their own. We are being run by the top 5% of our community, that's where our political vision is being generated. What we need to do through this process is get in touch with the unions; get in touch with other places where gay/lesbian/bi people are organized.

GCN: How will this bill reach a popular base that would then bombard their Congresspeople and Senators—including the base for the various civil rights organizations that make up LCCR? What's their commitment?

PE: You've just pointed to a basic flaw in our strategy—those of us who have been meeting are "drafters," not organizers. On the one hand, it's perfectly legitimate for some of us to be sitting around writing, because somebody has to get it on paper. But the information has not been shared with the broader community. In fact, it has been openly stated that we shouldn't share the specifics of the Civil Rights Bill, because we don't want our enemies to get a hold of what we're doing. Well, please, they are already going to spread whatever venom they want about us, who cares whether they see the exact bill we're drafting? They already have their strategy in place,

We are being run by the top 5% of our community, that's where our political vision is being generated.

What we need to do through this process is get in touch with the unions; get in touch with other places where gay/lesbian/bi people are organized.

GCN: Could you speak more to who gets mobilized, beyond the people you want to testify at the hearings?

PE: Often who gets mobilized is the already organized community, predominantly white, in some communities, predominantly male. My fear is that the people who are going to be mobilized are not the majority of people in our communities. I think generally, in terms of our national work, we need to look at where our community is at. Our community (however we feel about this) is organized around religious groups, softball, bowling leagues, the gay bands—that's where our community really is. And they look at us political types, as "oh, really, get out of my face." We have to find a way to really bring those folks in, and proselytizing around politics may not be the way to do it.

GCN: So, there isn't really a discussion among the group drafting the bill, the NGLTF, the HRCF, about who their constituency is? Why, e.g., can't we use this year's Pride celebrations, which always bring out a large cross-section of the gay/lesbian communities who never come out otherwise?

PE: Ideally that's what we should be doing. But, we're really at a crisis point. Our national groups are not much bigger than they were three or four years ago.

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A MOMENT OF GREAT CRISIS, GREAT POTENTIAL AND GREAT DANGER

by Margaret Cerullo

**This is a revised version of a speech delivered April 11, 1994 to the
Gay /Lesbian and Straight Teachers Network of Massachusetts**

WHAT HAS SHIFTED SINCE WALTA WAS AT PATCHOGUE High living out his pre-Stonewall queer childhood? A few of the following stories [e-mail missives] capture the confusing and contradictory moment we find ourselves in. In November in a small town in Virginia, outside DC two teenage women held hands and danced together during the slow dance at an ice-skating rink, and the owners promptly asked them to leave. Instead of a swift and jeering ejection, however, 60 other teenagers spontaneously intervened to try to prevent their departure; and a week later local Lesbian Avengers held (same sex) dance-ins at the rink. A second story: a young man was recently arrested in his high school for wearing a dress. Again, instead of meeting broad approval, the school has completely split on the decision and students, parents and teachers are avidly debating whether he has a right to wear a dress to school. And, the examples proliferate.

I don't have to emphasize to any of you that homophobia is alive and well, that it is being rekindled and continually reinvents itself—but it is contested. It does not have the same free reign that Walta's tormentors had at Patchogue High School. Yet, lest we get too optimistic, I was recently reading the "Queer Supplement" to the school newspaper at my alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania, and I was actually surprised by it. It was full of stories from students 19 and 20 years old, saying things like I grew up thinking I was the only queer on Long Island; or I grew up convinced there was no such thing as a Black lesbian; or in a high school of 500 people I sat for days in the library during lunch time, trying to find out something about myself, convinced that there had to be another *one* in a school of 500.

I suspect that great numbers of us are still engaged in keeping faith with the promises we made to ourselves as children—promises that no other kid would have to suffer the terrors of isolation, invisibility, and erasure that we did. A promise that with the relative freedom of adults, we would confront directly those forces that constricted our space to breathe, that terrorized us into numbness, that shamed us into self-loathing, that sought to eradicate anything queer from our worlds in pursuit of the desperate project of right living.

I want to keep jumping back and forth between our personal pasts and our present, and also our historical pasts and our present, because it is in this way that we begin to assemble the materials from which we can imagine and project the kind of future we want to live in. I want to survey the ground from which we do create our visions.

Remembering Stonewall

Historically I want to go back to the moment of Stonewall as we approach its 25th anniversary, that moment that promised us gay and lesbian liberation, and to remind you that Stonewall was part of a youth movement. Now it wasn't about youth, but remember that Stonewall took place a month before

categories, job categories, gender categories, and sexual categories. A future in which the marketplace would not determine our value or our values. A future in which we could live in more open and less segregated communities than many of us had grown up in. A time whose slogan was "All Power to the Imagination." A time when we dreamed about what we wanted, not what we thought we could get. If all we are allowed to think about is what we can get, we are first afraid and then no longer able to imagine what we want.

The Weakened Status of Civil Rights

I have been arguing for a long time that our movement is in danger of making a terrible mistake, and here I am borrowing from Norman Birnbaum who critiqued the Jewish leadership in this country for what I think also applies to our movement—and that mistake is to confuse the prosperity, influence and access of some of us with the security and safety of all of us. The latter, he underlined, can only be bought by dissipating hatred in society. And, that of course is our task. What kinds of challenges does it entail?

Last week after Joe Kennedy (D-MA) voted for the Hancock Amendment which would have banned federal funds to schools that "encourage or support homosexuality as a positive alternative life style," he said in defense of his vote, "I don't think they should be encouraging homosexuality in the schools" and then issued a press release affirming his support for a federal gay civil rights bill—as if the one cancelled the other. I think it is about time that we raise the stakes, raise the ante on what we expect from liberal politicians like Joe Kennedy who always begin by saying, "I do not condone or promote or believe the schools should encourage their 'lifestyle,'" but I do support their right to breathe the same air as we normal people do and to hold a job without reprisals. Perhaps it is time for us to ask, for how long will they continue to condone and promote and fund the schools to encourage a lifestyle that has done so much damage and violence to the lesbian and gay youth in its families, to the lesbian and gay parents and children in its neighborhoods and schools, to the gay men and lesbians on the streets of our cities and towns, in the corridors of our schools. How long will they condone a way of life that remains content to see gay men die because AIDS didn't affect the general population, will they continue to promote a way of life—heterosexuality—that cannot seem to exist as one among many but can only exist as the one with all the power, which won't allow itself to be seen as a truth, but must parade as *the* truth under its various pseudonyms and impersonations: family, romance, commitment and love. How long?

I raise all of this because I think it would be a terrible mistake to see federal civil rights legislation as the ultimate goal of our movement. To do so would fail to understand the significant weakening of the meaning of civil rights after 12 years of Reagan/Bush assaults. The stripping of civil rights' protection from the goal that underwrote it, the goal of empowerment—the deliberately and necessarily *open* goal of cultural, political, social and economic empowerment. That is the split we have to confront: achieving the goal of civil rights protection is not the same as empowerment. That is the message we should have learned from the gays in the military debacle. Those of us who have come to claim our place at the table, to claim our full cultural, intellectual, social citizenship are told that we are welcome on these terms—they won't ask as long as we agree not to tell who we are and how we live and love. Or as Lani Guinier found out, we're welcome as long as we agree not to tell what we understand about how exclusionary power continues to operate even after civil rights

Cheers, Cheers For Old Cha Cha Ass

by Walta Borawski

**Cheers, cheers for old Patchogue High;
You bring the whiskey, I'll bring the rye;
When we yell We yell like hell**

**Acne, puberty, dry heaves each pre-
school morning were not bad enough:**

**At Patchogue High a circle of charming
boys called me Cha Cha Ass Borawski.**

**Hey, look at Walter, he cha chas when he walks.
He cha chas when he tries to hit a ball.
He probably cha chas while he shits: Let's watch.**

**I'm in a toilet stall, making up god.
O lord god let me
kiss your boot do you
think you could
disguise me?)**

**Hey, look, Jayne Mansfield's in Borawski's gym suit.
Hey, Jayne, what's happened to your tits?
If Walter had Mansfield's tits I'd screw him.
If Walter had Mansfield's tits we'd ALL screw him.**

**Ha ha ha. Cha cha cha. Ha ha Ha Cha
Cha cha Until**

**shots called are one's own shots
they are ugly, & must be muffled.**

**I said No to their tenth year reunion,
I added a sketch, I threw in a poem:**

**Cha Cha Ass Borawski will not be there.
He don't mind the name anymore. He's**

**thinking of legally adopting it. It's
his only legal thought these days. But**

**now he meringues when he walks, he
dreams up the devil while he shits.**

Woodstock, to create a memory or an image of its time and its counter-cultural context. If Stonewall wasn't directly about youth, it did project a youthful future—unencumbered by rigid notions of gender, of sexuality, of normality, of right living. A future that we would invent rather than one that had already invented us, pre-assigned us to ready made social

legislation has been passed. We must not accept the terms of that bargain. To equate our security and safety again with the passage of civil rights legislation—the answer to that I think can be given by any gay or lesbian teacher in Massachusetts who, despite the passage of the State Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights Bill is still unable or afraid to come out in their schools because of the fear of reprisals and discrimination that they face. So we have to begin to address what stands in that gap between the passage of formal legislation that recognizes our equality, and the full recognition of our humanity and dignity.

The Urban Crisis

To address that gap I would like to start by asking, *What is Clintonism?*—that much hoped for and promised sea change. What does it promise us? We are one and one half years into the new administration and as far as I can tell the central issue for our community remains fighting the Right. Even though the Rightwing is out of power, it has been dislodged from the presidency, it is still setting the terms of political debate on most of the issues that are being debated in this country—on race, on crime, on welfare, on foreign policy, on urban policy and on sexuality. Clinton recently underlined his commitment to “family values,” agreeing that afterall, Dan Quayle had a point in his condemnation of Murphy Brown. It is hard to see what’s left that Clinton hasn’t conceded on.

I want to spend a moment on an issue that is perhaps not the most obvious, but I do believe it is one of the most critical for our communities. That is the issue of urban policy where Clintonism has been continuous with the 12 years of Reagan/Bush assaults on the cities. Years that saw the intensifying segregation of our society, its resegregation, the wholesale disinvestment in our cities, the withdrawal of federal funds, white straight suburban flight, the immense suburbanization of resources, of jobs, of economic growth. This resulted in a significant reduction of entitlements to health, to education and to welfare; and in the process of that reduction, a devaluation of citizenship, of the citizenship of those who live in the “inner city,” itself a code for race, for people of color. That is, the meaning of our formal equality and our formal citizenship depends upon what is going on in civil society, in social life and on whether our fellow citizens can recognize and respond to our need.

Now it is my argument that we can understand how that withdrawal of resources has been possible only if we look at how the cities are figured, symbolically, in our political discourse. The cities are seen as places of immorality, decadence and vice—as the home of the expendables. I’m thinking here of Pete Wilson, Governor of California, “Welfare mothers and new immigrants are multiplying faster than taxpayers.” Goaded on by Rush Limbaugh and Howard Stern, white middle class suburban “breadwinners” see themselves as under siege. The deeper they withdraw into the self-enclosed world of suburban housing tract isolation, the more they fear the outside world. I believe that that’s the ground on which Ross Perot was able to be so successful in getting masses of Americans waking up every day thinking about the deficit rather than the plight of the inner cities and the abandonment of the poor. And in furthering a rhetoric about the cities, such that spending on the cities becomes “pandering to special interests” and “tough choices” means more austerity for those who live there.

So far, what I’ve been offering is a pretty straightforward familiar progressive critique of the failure of urban policy. But what is too often missing from these analyses, from urban sociology, urban cultural studies, urban politics, is the recognition that the city is also where gay people live and where we are known

to live. Part of the symbolic representation of the city as the home of the expendables is connected to that recognition. The failure of an urban policy to develop combined with the rhetoric of hard choices and austerity—that means the abandonment of AIDS funding which we are seeing being played out in New York City right now with the Giuliani cutbacks. I believe it is in the interest of community, it should be a central priority of our movement to demand an urban policy; that is, a commitment of our national resources to ensuring the health, the education, and

battles of concern to Christians are in neighborhoods, school boards, city councils and state legislatures.” What are these issues “of concern to Christians” at the local, city, and state levels? I think their agenda can be summarized: to forbid school districts from teaching tolerance or acceptance of lesbian and gay people; to make it illegal for cities and states to adopt and enforce civil rights protections; force AIDS educators and AIDS educational materials to make moral judgements about homosexuality; and—to summarize it all—to *permanently institutionalize homophobia at the grassroots level*. [again thanks to internet for this helpful summary] It is that momentum we have to counter, at the grassroots level, if we are going to ensure the safety and security of all of us.

The interesting thing is that the Right does not seem to care if it loses these statewide initiatives in the courts. If they lose one in the courts, as they did in Colorado, they see that as an occasion to devise the next initiative in a way that can withstand legal scrutiny. But more important, in fighting these state by state initiatives, they get a platform to go house to house, church to church, school to school to talk about homosexuality. We on the other hand have been relying on the courts and too often do not put our resources into going house to house, school to school and church to church to enter the conversation. We rely instead on distant, slick (and expensive) media strategies. And despite what all the high paid consultants tell you, I think this is a losing strategy.

I do believe we are in a moment of great crisis, great potential and great danger, and must ask what is in place in our movement, and in the kinds of alliances that we are trying to build, to confront the challenge from the Right? If we ask that question we have to address several crucial questions, of which I will name three. The first is the polarization between race and sexuality. The second is the need to disentangle the many strands of what we too often view as a homophobic monolith, and characterize as “Rightwing;” and the third is the inability of our movement to take up the issue of youth as its central and leading priority.

Polarization between Race and Sexuality

The struggle over the Rainbow Curriculum in NYC points to the success of the Right in activating and mobilizing a polarization between “parents of color” (assumed to be straight), on the one hand; and “rich, white gay men,” on the other hand.

I would argue to you that that polarization between “rich, white gay men” and “people of color” has been aided and abetted by our movement—in its representation of our movement as rich, white and male. How have we come to represent ourselves as rich white and male? I think two things have fuelled that representation—the one I call the politics of respectability and the other the politics of mimicry. When we feel endangered we think our safety lies in putting our most respectable, that is, least threatening face forward. We think we can appeal to the powerful, calm their fears and keep our own painful histories at bay, by representing ourselves as really not so different from them. That is part of what fuels the strategy that confuses our safety with access to power; a strategy that I would argue is one of the sites that perpetuates racism in our movement. That strategy forgets that we are not just speaking to the powerful, we’re speaking to ourselves and everyone else in this society about who we are.

The other thing that fuels this strategy is what I call the gay consumer movement, the politics of mimicry. We are *almost* the same as you, but not quite. The

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"WE DO DISHES, YOU KNOW?"

"Homoteens" living the life in Boston

by Shelley Mains and Maura Pensak

WHILE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE RECEIVING INCREASING attention as members of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) communities, the realities of their lives are obscure not only to heterosexuals of all ages, but to many GLBT adults as well. "Homoteens," a recent video profiling five gay and lesbian teens in New York, offers an opportunity for these youth to share their stories. Producer/director Joan Jubela gave her project the full title "Homoteens, or Five Portraits of (Mostly Urban African American, Latino and White) Gay and Lesbian (Upper-Middle and Working-Middle Class) Youth and Young People Made By Themselves and Me." True to her title, Jubela assisted the teens in producing their own self portraits, resulting in a creative and often moving documentary. Four Boston youth, all educators with the local Tobacco Education for Gay and Lesbian

Coalition for GLBT Youth. We would like to thank Valerie Alarcon, a straight ally and member of TEGLY who joined us during the discussion, and James Collins, adult advisor to TEGLY.

Tumbling Down the Jagged Slide

Maura: What do you think would be someone's impressions if they watched this video without having any knowledge of gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender youth?

Frank: I think they would get a realistic picture of what gay young people are going through today.

Jamie: I liked that the video showed them in their real lives and it wasn't so stereotypical—not like all boys are flamboyant and all women are bulldykes.

when you were sitting on a bench in the South End [a racially and ethnically mixed neighborhood in Boston with a large gay male population] and you gave each other a kiss and got hit with snowballs.

Mike: The video didn't show much of what it's like day-to-day to go out into the streets or into a classroom and have "Faggot! queer! faggot! queer!" just drilled into your head minute after minute, person after person, time after time. Then you get on the subway and it's "What are you looking at, faggot?" Once you hear that enough it's like unbearable.

Jamie: I didn't see much of these kids struggling to come out, struggling with their friends. That's a very big thing that a lot of kids go through. Not only kids—older people coming out struggle with that.



Jamie Battaglia



Ron Cook



Frank Fernandez

Youth (TEGLY) Program, gathered to review "Homoteens" and to assess its effectiveness for use in homophobia education. Their discussion raises the familiar tension between emphasizing our communities' similarities (to the "normal" majority) and promoting our differences. The reviewers went on to share their experiences of being gay and lesbian youth in Boston, and offered insightful commentary on our communities' responsibility to young people. What follows, therefore, is an unusual mix of film review and social criticism.

The youth participants are Frank Fernandez, Jamie Battaglia, Ron Cook and Mike. Frank describes himself as a 20-year old, Latino male. He says, "I have been out of high school for three or four years. I'm half out; I have one foot out into the room and the other one in the closet."

Jamie is a 19-year old Italian-American woman. She says, "I've been out since I was 15. I quit school in my senior year and got my GED soon after. I work for the Healthy Boston Coalition for GLBT Youth."

Ron says, "I am a 20-year old African-American male. I'm originally from Texas. I moved to Boston to attend college."

Mike is a 17-year old white male. He says, "I've been out for two years. I live in Boston and I hate it. And I'm getting out of high school this year. Finally."

The interviewers are Shelley Mains, a health educator and member of the steering committee for the Healthy Boston Coalition for GLBT Youth, and Maura Pensak, coordinator of the Healthy Boston

lives and it wasn't so stereotypical—not like all boys are flamboyant and all women are bulldykes.

Ron: I thought it was kind of boring. It was good and somewhat informative, but if I was a straight person I would still have a ton of questions that weren't answered.

Mike: I think it might have been boring because it wasn't the typical drag queens flying around and storming up the street in the gay pride parade doing the runway; it wasn't the lesbians with the blue hair shaved...the kids were just average. Like "we do dishes," you know?

(Laughter)

Jamie: It's true! Kids think that all we do is go around and have sex every night.

Mike: But notice, like you said, it was boring: people don't want to see this. Even gay people don't want to see this. They want to see the extravagant.

Maura: Can you talk about what you would like the media to show about GLBT youth?

Ron: I want them to show how hard it is for us to come out to ourselves, and then to our families, and then to society. It's so super hard. I never came out to my family until recently, and that wasn't until I had to. For teenagers who go to school, like Mike, it's hard to have to hide who you are. It's super hard to show affection, because you can't walk down the street and hold hands with a lover unless you want to be ridiculed, or even gay-bashed.

Jamie: Like what happened to you, Ron, and your ex

Mike: Those kids just sort of slid out gracefully, whereas most people tumble down the jagged, blade ridden slide...

(Laughter)

Jamie: They didn't show people like Michael going to school every day, being someone totally he's not, or someone like Ron, living as a gay male every day, out and about.

Ron: It is super hard to deal with that stuff every day. When you're not out and you wake up, just getting clothes to wear is a whole chore in itself. For a guy you have to get butch clothes, for a woman you have to get very feminine clothes. 'Cause when you go out you have to play your role as a straight man or a straight woman. You can't wear, like, a little sash (I'm not saying that all gay men wear sashes!)

Jamie: The video doesn't show the double life.

Ron: But whose choice is that? If you're closeted it's no one's choice but yours. If you want to be out, you can be out; you just have to accept the consequences.

Mike: But the consequences can be extremely intense.

Jamie: Sometimes it's not a choice to be in the closet. I mean, it's not a choice for Mike. He doesn't choose to be in the closet at school, or anywhere else. But you would not walk down the street being out in South Boston [a largely Irish, working-class neighborhood, some of whose members have blocked gay men and lesbians from joining the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade].

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Demands made to National Gay & Lesbian Task Force by Youth on Mon. Nov. 15, 1993

We dedicate this statement of demands to all those who have struggled and died unacknowledged, prior to us.

Whereas the age at which most young people acknowledge their sexual identity is between 14 and 16 for men, and 16 and 19 for women; and

Whereas it is estimated that 30% of youth suicides are committed by lesbian/gay youth, and whereas gay and lesbian youth are 2-3 times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual youth; and

Whereas 26% of gay youth are forced to leave home because of their sexual identities; and

Whereas 68% of young gay men and 83% of young lesbians report using alcohol and other drugs on a regular basis; and

Whereas 41% of lesbian/gay youth suffer violence from their families, peers and strangers; and

Whereas in 1992 approximately 20% of all persons with AIDS/HIV were most likely infected as teenagers; and

Whereas bisexual and transgender youth are not included in these studies; and

Whereas we appreciate the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in their dedication to build a movement promoting freedom and full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, we believe that this movement must actively include and honor youth.

Therefore, be it resolved that:

We, the young lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered at Creating Change Youth Intensive, demand and deserve positive action taken toward the following by December 31, 1993:

- * statistically proportional representation for GLBT youth (based on the 1990 Census Bureau's estimation of the percentage of Americans 25 and under) voting on the NGLTF board, at least one of which must go to a youth under 21 with gender and racial parity. These places will either be non-fundraising or reduced fundraising;

- * youth of color represented fairly in NGLTF;

- * action taken in a direct manner to end the increasing rate of suicide among GLBT youth;

- * a college and cost-of-living fund created for GLBT youth whose parents cut them off;

- * an area on the NGLTF area on America Online maintained and organized by NGLTF, set aside for GLBT youth;

- * a youth steering committee to choose the criteria for selection of GLBT youth board members and action for NGLTF to take in youth issues;

- * direct action taken to end the skyrocketing incidence of AIDS/HIV and other STDs among youth;

- * a Youth Institute prior to the 1994 Creating Change conference in Dallas that does not conflict with any other Institutes, particularly those for people of color;

- * designated funding for youth and youth-oriented programs; early designation of time and space for youth to plan and fundraise for the 1994 Creating Change conference in Dallas;

- * GLBT youth of color scholarships;

- * a youth staff member of NGLTF dedicated to creating a GLBT youth movement;

- * recognition for the contributions of GLBT youth to the movement as a whole today, past, and future;

- * reduced rates for GLBT youth to attend future Creating Change conferences and all NGLTF functions;

- * a longer time period for youth to apply for scholarships to future Creating Change conferences, and more outreach to make youth aware;

- * special programs and outreach for GLBT youth in under-represented sectors, such as those who are in foster care, in rural areas, homeless or in juvenile detention;

- * more vocal advocacy of issues of importance to GLBT youth;

- * the addition of ageism in all training by NGLTF.

AIDS GOES UNION

by Raymond L. Rigoglioso

SINCE THEIR INCEPTION, AIDS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS (ASOs) have symbolized empowerment for the gay and lesbian community. They represent the collective efforts of a group faced with a holocaust, in a country that turned its back. And they have won exceptional victories — normalizing safe sex behaviors, setting the standard for care and fighting for humane government and community response.

Today ASOs are virtually unrecognizable when compared to a decade ago. Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) in New York grew from just 6 volunteers in 1982 to a staff of 270 and a volunteer base of 7900 in 1994. The San Francisco AIDS Foundation has 101 staff members, up from 73 a year ago. The Whitman-Walker Clinic began as a VD clinic in 1974, and now comprises a main facility, three satellite offices, a medical center and a host of residential facilities for homeless PWAs.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Jim Graham, Executive Director of the Whitman-Walker Clinic, insisted he supported the recent union drive that brought local 1199, the Service Employees International Union, to the clinic on a 88-21 vote: "I think it's a healthy empowerment," he said. "If I were a line staff member, I probably would have voted for it."

But William Taylor, member of the organizing committee, 27-year union activist and Addictions Counselor at the clinic, believes that Graham had other motives. "The main reason Jim Graham didn't resist the union was because we had a majority in favor before we officially announced it," he said. Additionally, he maintained that Graham interfaces with top members of the Democratic Party, who are pro-union — coming across as anti-union in these circles

Interestingly, women and people of color at the Whitman-Walker Clinic largely supported the union, whereas dissension rested mostly among the white men.

This expansion means growing pains for ASOs. More services require more administration, and thus bigger bureaucracies. More offices create divisions between departments, and lead to inefficient service delivery. Regardless of the size of the AIDS bureaucracy, however, staff bonding runs deep in an ASO, because working there is about fighting the epidemic and serving those afflicted.

The rift between the spirit of grass-roots activism that drives people to work at ASOs and the reality of their cumbersome bureaucracies has become evident in the last year. In unexpected moves, professionals at GMHC and staff at the Whitman-Walker Clinic and the San Francisco AIDS Foundation all successfully voted in union representation.

The reasons for the union drives are similar across these agencies: policies that allow firing at any time without due process; fear of retaliation by management towards staff for expressing concerns; staff turnover/burnout; a perception of random and/or top-down decision-making by management; inequitable hiring, promotion and firing procedures; poor inter-departmental communication; and poor management response to staff concerns and needs.

Yet, AIDS organizations were created to serve clients and questions like these circulated among staff. Will a union take time and money away from client programs? Will union regulations limit or challenge the role of volunteers in these agencies? Will union rules force an AIDS organization to go on strike? Are unions sensitive to issues of people with AIDS, gays and lesbians? And will the political ties of a union affect the missions and effectiveness of an AIDS organization?

What most people working at these ASOs can agree upon is that there are serious internal problems that must be addressed.

would be politically awkward. Finally, the president of Whitman-Walker's board, Bill Olwell, is the number three man at the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. Predictably, Whitman-Walker management presented no obstacles to facilitating the voting process, and nearly eight weeks after the union drive began, the vote was cast, with overwhelming staff support.

Interestingly, women and people of color at the Whitman-Walker Clinic largely supported the union, whereas dissension rested mostly among the white men. According to Joseph Izzo, psychotherapist in Mental Health Services at the Clinic, and member of the organizing committee, "Whites in our culture have a sense of entitlement that prevents them from seeing oppression. Women and people of color know differently."

The grievances that drove the Whitman-Walker union movement mirror staff complaints in other ASOs. Izzo discussed some of them in more detail. The clinic is plagued with extraordinarily high staff turnover: at least 6-8 staff leave each month, maybe more. Unemployment insurance compensation payments run three times the national average. And a 1988 organizational analysis cited many of the same structural problems that the union organizing committee complained about 5 years later.

Jeff Falk, Early Intervention Coordinator, was more apprehensive about the union at first. But like Taylor and Izzo, exasperation with an unresponsive management led him to support it. "For years we've expressed interest in having a sick leave bank for staff who have exhausted their sick leave. We've never seen any action on it." He also mentioned a Human Resource study on wage scales, the results of which were never implemented.

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"It's very tempting to be for the union," noted Sean Bugg, Male Sex Industry Project Coordinator at Whitman-Walker. Bugg agrees with Taylor and Izzo about Whitman-Walker's internal problems, but he thinks the solutions should come from within the organization. "A union is more concerned with a union than anything else," he said. "The question is, do you solve a problem of bureaucracy by adding another bureaucracy?"

* * *

Given Graham's willingness to work with the union, current contract negotiations may proceed amicably, and the union may turn out to be a healthy empowerment for staff. Well aware of the bitter union battle at GMHC, Graham's support may have been additionally motivated by a desire not to repeat GMHC's nightmare at the Whitman-Walker Clinic.

THE GMHC CONUNDRUM

On February 4, GMHC held a vote to determine whether New York City's 1199, the Health and Human Services Employees Union, would represent staff at the agency. The day before the vote, it became apparent that union-eligible staff, (the bargaining unit), would vote against it. Discovering a previously-unknown option, members of the organizing committee, (those who organized the union drive), learned that the bargaining unit could legally be split into two groups: support staff and professionals. The support staff unit would consist mainly of those who performed lower-level direct service and administrative duties; the professional unit would include such positions as lawyers and social workers. To the surprise and confusion of many staff, the organizing committee chose this option and split the ballot into two bargaining units. Support staff voted against 1199 by 78 to 28. Professionals, however, voted in favor of the union by 10-8. Some professionals, not understanding the last-minute split in the ballot, felt manipulated and angry, and indicated that they would have voted differently had they fully understood what they were choosing.

The confusing vote was only the tail end of a long battle among staff. A strong anti-union stance from management sparked a protracted debate that spread resentment and anger throughout the agency.

Besides the philosophical arguments about unions and ASOs, questions were raised about whether 1199 itself was an appropriate choice. 1199 represents many Catholic hospitals in New York City, which are affiliated with the archdiocese of New York. These hospitals receive the largest number of contracts for health care in New York City. The archdiocese of New York is headed by the notorious arch-homophobe and AIDS-reactionary Cardinal O'Connor, who has refused to allow accurate AIDS educational information in these hospitals. In 1990, GMHC filed suit against the archdiocese and the city because of this. Fears of Cardinal O'Connor influencing GMHC were unfounded, however, since the union contract, which determines most of the union's policies and procedures within an organization, will be negotiated between GMHC union members and management.

The union's own record on AIDS issues is questionable, however. It is true that Dennis Rivera, president of 1199, spoke at the United For AIDS Action rally in Times Square before the Democratic National Con-

vention in 1992. The rally, attended by hundreds of organizations from around the city and throughout the country, sought to put AIDS on Clinton's agenda. However, no 1199 contingent was present. David Barr, a GMHC staff member actively involved in organizing the rally, decried 1199's absence: "We need to ask where 1199 has been in the AIDS movement." On the positive side, however, 1199 contingents have participated in the AIDS Walk, which benefits GMHC and other AIDS organizations around the city. Rivera refused to respond to repeated requests for an interview.

Further, GMHC staff have complained about Dennis Rivera's knowledge about even basic AIDS issues. During a talk with GMHC staff during the union drive, a staff memo claims that Rivera never mentioned the word "AIDS," referring to it instead as "your cause." Yadira Bonilla, member of the GMHC bargaining unit who opposed 1199, reported that Rivera himself admitted "we are not experts in *your issue* (emphasis added)." Blunders like these raise questions about the union's intentions and its ability to sensitively work with an organization like GMHC.

Paul Friedman, Vice President for the New Organizing Department of 1199, admits that working with GMHC has been a growing experience for him and the union. He claims that in the past, 1199 has been in the forefront of major political movements, such as the Civil Rights movement and anti-Vietnam war protests. On the subject of AIDS and gay and lesbian rights, however, the union lags far behind. Its mem-

against, 40 in favor, on some accounts because of Rivera's threat to change the 1199 constitution and throw people out of the union. Practices like these make a stronger case against having 1199 at GMHC.

MUDSLINGING AND MISINFORMATION

Unfortunately, the battle at GMHC was not so much about the grievances of the organizing committee, but about mudslinging and misinformation. Management "fact sheets" tugged at the loyalties of staff. Two were entitled, "The 1199 Constitution: Are These the Rules You Want to Govern Your Life?", and "On Strike Against People With AIDS." Taking the boiler-plate 1199 constitution out of context, management claimed that the union could call GMHC to strike if other member hospitals struck. It failed to mention that the union contract could include a "no strike" clause if staff don't want to strike — something that many AIDS service organization employees feel very strongly about. Scott Melvin shed some light on this claim: "How will GMHC help striking nurses on Long Island?"

Management also claimed that the 1199 member pledge to "defend against the enemies" of the union would divide the agency. It proposed, for example, if a GMHC staff member filed a grievance for a client staying at an 1199 hospital, that the union could consider that employee an enemy and could take action against him or her. William Taylor of the Whitman-Walker Clinic, considered these claims demagoguery. "A union wouldn't have anything to do with that legitimately or legally," he explained. In this case, the situation would be resolved between GMHC and that hospital.

The organizing committee, on the other hand, is also responsible for misinformation. One memo proclaimed "Your Health is in Danger," proposing that health benefits could be cut at any time. This is highly unlikely at an AIDS organization, especially at GMHC, where the health benefits surpassed those that the union offered. Management responded with a memo which ended with the following: "Keep in mind that this type of misinformation reveals the unreliability of the information you are receiving from the GMHC-1199 Organizing Committee."

Fears on both sides of the debate were partially justified, however. A union will bring in a rigid bureaucracy that GMHC or other AIDS organizations will have to wrestle with. The union may not understand the complexities of the way an AIDS organization works, and that ASOs may have to spend time educating it. A union won't take over the agency, especially if all staff are truly concerned about serving people with AIDS. Staff and management will ultimately decide on the contract, including salary increases, benefits, whether to include a "no strike" clause, the role of volunteers, etc. Given the right union, with time, patience and a lot of work, unions can work for AIDS organizations.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS' MISTAKES

In 1989, the Northwest AIDS Foundation successfully completed a union drive. Five years before, the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center, which maintains a substantial HIV services clinic, also voted in union representation. Staff in these two agencies organized union drives for many of the same reasons as their counterparts at GMHC, Whitman-Walker and the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. In the years since the vote, the unions they have chosen have neither overtaken their agencies, nor have they solved all their problems. Overall, the cases of the Northwest AIDS Foundation and the Los

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Liquor Laws once forbade serving gays. In 1966, the Mattachine Society staged a "sip-in" at a New York City bar.

photo: Fred McDarrah

bership has no visible caucuses representing people with HIV. On the positive side, the Executive Council of 1199 unanimously approved a resolution in March to include sexual orientation in its anti-discrimination clause. A union-wide vote is set to follow, with a high likelihood of passage. The question that remains is, does GMHC want to be responsible for educating 1199 and advocating about AIDS issues within the union when it has an epidemic to fight?

In addition, Rivera may be just as anti-union as the GMHC management. A July 27, 1993 *Village Voice* article details how Rivera busted a union drive within the 1199 home office. Among the demands of this group of mostly clerical employees, was arbitration protection against unfair firings, a basic right which the union fights for among its membership. Rivera eventually agreed to accept them as a bargaining unit only under certain conditions, including the stipulation that this unit would lose membership in 1199, the union for which they work. Essentially, Rivera threatened to change the constitution of 1199, which is legally challengeable. The union vote failed 156

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR SWEATSHOPS?

WHAT'S UP WITH LEVI STRAUSS?

by Susie Day

JAMES, MY THOROUGHLY GAY FRIEND, WANTS A NEW pair of jeans, and they have to be Levi's. "There's just something about 501's on the ass of a gay man," James smiles. "That arrow design accentuates your butt. In gay porn, Levi's pop up everywhere. Levi's brings up the image of the American individualist. It's a pretty cool company, too, in terms of its politics. Really progressive."

"Oh yeah?" I say to James. "I hear there's a boycott on. Hundreds of Mexican-American women, middle-aged, many of them single mothers without education, were laid off when Levi's closed its plant in San Antonio."

"Stop. I don't believe it."

I want James to believe it. Isn't there, after all, something oxymoronic about the concept of a "progressive company"? With its well-publicized health plan that provides for lovers as well as spouses of its employees, its open denial of funding to the Boy Scouts for their discrimination against gays, Levi Strauss & Co. is still the world's largest clothing manufacturer. It sold \$5.6 billion worth of apparel in 1992—its sixth straight year of record profits. Yet Levi's has obviously hurt people who have even less access to a movement and the media than do gay men and lesbians. Queer consumers, I say to myself, shouldn't be lulled into thinking that buying from Levi's and other "socially responsible" companies means working for social change. I decide to phone Irene Reyna, one of the workers whom Levi's laid off, in San Antonio.

Reyna is a coordinator at Fuerza Unita ("United Force"), the organization that arose in response to Levi's shutdown. For seven years at the plant, she sewed men's sport coats, and Levi's Dockers, fighting carpal tunnel syndrome. At \$9 an hour, Reyna was one of the plant's highest-paid workers. I asked her how it was when the plant closed.

"On January 16, 1990, when we began our workday, we heard an announcement over the loudspeaker that instructed us to go to a meeting. I saw nothing but fear in my co-workers' eyes, uncertainty.... So the man said, 'With a lot of sorrow and pain in our hearts, we have to let you know that we are shutting down this plant and moving operations to Costa Rica. We're doing this in order to stay competitive.'"

"Some of my co-workers just walked around in a daze; others started hugging each other... I remember very clearly one of the ladies started screaming. She had worked for the company for about 35 years. She started screaming and she hasn't stopped since. She's here in the insane asylum in the state hospital. She could not cope with the fact that, after giving all her youth and her loyalty to this company, that they were kicking us out like — excuse the pun — an old pair of blue jeans."

I read newspaper and magazine articles, labor reports. I learn that Irene Reyna is one of about 10 million people in the United States who are out of work — despite Bush's and Clinton's campaign promises for "jobs, jobs, jobs." Only one in five retrained workers can find a job that pays even 80% of what that worker's former job paid. By 1992, of those Americans who still held jobs, 16.5 million —

or 20% of the labor force — existed below the poverty line. "People like us," Reyna says, "the indigenous people, the people of color, the women, the people who are subjugated all the time — we're tired of it.... People say, 'Hey, they're not going to come back and open Levi's. Why are you still fighting them?' It's not just Levi's. We have to broaden our views and see the world for what it is."

With a broader view, it's difficult to look at Levi's without seeing the larger network of multinational companies. Levi Strauss is only one of hundreds that have closed down plants in the States and moved to offshore free trade zones.

Free trade — or export processing — zones are areas in "developing" countries that attract multinational companies with tax-free status, customs-free import of raw materials, lax or virtually nonexistent pollution laws — and incomparably cheap labor. On the average, companies can save about \$30,000 a year per worker by moving outside the U.S. "Free trade zones," write Annette Fuentes and Barbara Ehrenreich in their book *Women in the Global Factory*, "mean more freedom for business and less freedom for people. Inside, behind walls often topped with barbed wire, the zones resemble a huge labor camp where trade unions, strikes, and freedom of movement are severely limited. A special police force is on hand to search people and vehicles entering or leaving the zones."

Since 1980, when the Reagan administration began its "Trade, not Aid" policy, a great many U.S. companies have relocated, particularly to Mexico and the Caribbean Basin, to get their microprocessors assembled, their computer data entered, their clothes sewn. Then, back in the States, consumers are hit with price markups from 300 - 500%. A piece of American Tourister luggage, for instance, may cost \$1.53 to make in Costa Rica, but it can sell here for \$259.00. Companies indecisive about relocating are persuaded by advertisements like this one, which appeared in a 1991 issue of *Bobbin*, an apparel trade magazine:

"Rosa Martinez produces apparel for U.S. markets on her sewing machine in El Salvador. You can hire her for 33 cents an hour...."

If you could see the picture of "Rosa" that appears over this caption, you'd know that she is not only cheap; she is also young. Virtually all of the workers in these assembly plants are female, and most are under 25. Although it's usually illegal to employ people under 17 or so, some workers are as young as 13. Women, it is thought, especially young ones, are less likely to cause trouble, and can easily be replaced. "Crudely put," write Ehrenreich and Fuentes, "the relationship between many Third World governments and multinational corporations is like that of a pimp and his customers. The governments advertise their women, sell them and keep them in line for the multinational 'johns.'"

What has recently outraged many taxpaying Americans, however, is a 1992 study by the National Labor Committee Education Fund in Support of Human Rights in Central America (NLC). It seems that, for well over a decade, ads like the one for "Rosa Martinez" have been funded by tax dollars under a

federal program called the U.S. Agency for International Development (U.S.A.I.D.). From 1980 until 1992, the study says, U.S.A.I.D. spent over \$1.3 billion to finance low-interest loans, tax incentives, job training agencies, advertisements, and computerized blacklists of labor organizers, in an effort to encourage companies to expand into the Third World. As of 1992, according to the NLC, there were 200 free trade zones operating in 20 countries in Mexico and the Caribbean Basin, housing well over 3000 manufacturing plants which employed some 735,000 workers. In Haiti, probably the hemisphere's poorest country, exports have risen by almost 50%, despite the continuing OAS embargo. "Well at least," James might say, "these people have jobs. Maybe 33 cents is a lot to them."

But the NLC report goes on to say that prevailing factory wages in Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica — all countries where Levi's operates, by the way — are able to provide for only 40% of a family's minimum daily needs. The going 60-cent-an-hour wage in El Salvador "provides barely 15% of what a family needs for even the most marginal life in the ghettos of San Salvador." "Free trade zone" is a gross misnomer," writes Jack Sheinkman, President of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) for the *L.A. Times*. "Free slave zone" would be closer to the truth."

Because these "slaves" are women, sexual harassment is an ingrained part of their monotonous workday. In an article for *Z Magazine*, Susan Meeker-Lowry speaks of the "Friday night rape parties" that are common on the graveyard shifts of many Mexican maquiladoras. Occasionally women are killed. In order to get a job in the first place, women are often required to show proof that they are menstruating, and face dismissal if they become pregnant. *New York Daily News* columnist Juan Gonzalez recounts the story of Maria del Carmen Portillo, a worker in a Honduran plant. There is, Portillo says, a small room at her sewing factory known to employees as the "torture chamber." Here, young women who won't follow orders are brought for beatings or sexual abuse. Once, Portillo, caught chewing gum, was made to wear the gum on her forehead for the rest of the day. Other workers are slapped, hit in the head with screwdriver handles, or made to stand for hours, balancing heavy spools of thread on their heads. Often working 11-hour shifts, Maria sewed about 1000 zippers a day into Wilson running suits, and received \$21 a week. When she left the factory at 20, she was one of the oldest employees there.

Where is Levi Strauss & Co. in this post-industrial nightmare? According to its own glossy brochures, Levi's has 76 production facilities in 24 countries the world over. South of the Mexican border it has contracts with — or "sources" from — various manufacturers in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic. I dial Dave Samson, Senior Manager of Corporate Communications at Levi's home office in San Francisco. I ask him about the conditions under which people work in Levi's plants in Mexico and the Caribbean Basin.

Samson explains that Levi's has "sourcing guidelines." Under these guidelines, employees cannot work more than 60 hours a week, and must have at least one day off in seven.

"As you know, in a lot of developing countries, people work 10-12 hours a day, seven days a week... And in those countries, workers in our facilities earn in the top 1/3 of what people earn — in most cases, significantly above the minimum average wage."

That's the good news, I think. The bad news is that it doesn't get any better than this. Levi's is, in fact, the

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DESPECTACULARIZING THE QUEER THING

A "no big deal" trend in movieland

By Elizabeth Pincus

THERE'S SOMETHING AFOOT IN MOVIE- AND TV-land: same-sex eros is no longer as covert as it used to be. Which is not to say it's shriekingly overt, either, just that a sea change is underway in the representation of forbidden love and—subsequently—in the public's response to it. That *Roseanne's* lesbian kiss (you know, with Carol Burnett) failed to cause more than a blip on the collective seismograph is a heartening development; that Tom Hanks' lack of a kiss with Antonio Banderas stirred such righteous defense is more troubling. I guess all those heartlanders who smilingly tolerate (eat up, in fact) *Roseanne's* antics just can't be trusted to stomach a man-to-man smoocheroo.

Of course, there are myriad differences between network television and first-run movies—the burden of motivating consumers to get out of the house, for starters. And many people who find lesbian eroticism palatable—sort of a Victoria's Secret catalog come languidly to life—still find gay male sex threatening. (e.g., the gaze-in-the-military debate was largely focused on men, even though scads more women are witchhunted out of service.) Still, it's ironic that television, generally considered low- to middle-brow, has pushed the lavender envelope far more daringly than has the supposedly sophisticated world of feature film.

But not all mainstream moviemakers are cowed by convention, and the ranks of those willing to test the homo waters are growing. Increasingly, this development cuts across the nebulous divide between independent and studio-backed movies, and crosses international borders as well. For instance, one of the hottest tickets on the festival circuit is Tomas Gutierrez and Juan Carlos Tabio's *Strawberry and Chocolate*, a Cuban film about the friendship between two men, straight and gay, who are on opposite ends of the political spectrum. The film, described as a smart and funny reworking of *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, is slated for release in the fall.

A handful of movies playing around the country this spring also demonstrate edgy approaches to the big, bad world of sexual variance. From the insular clubbiness of *Grief*, to the wide-eyed wholesomeness of *Threesome*, to *Salmonberries'* spare evocation of desire, these movies treat same-sex attraction as normal. After decades of invisibility and/or pathology, such non-news is good news. Or, as Rose Troche, director of the sassy lesbian comer *Go Fish*, put it to *Filmmaker* magazine: "Certain gay films seem to say, 'Look at me! I'm gay!' We wanted to

despectacularize the queer thing, as if to say, 'Let's get over it. It's not news anymore.'

Indeed, Troche walks the walk in her debut feature. A girl-meets-girl saga by and about the under-30 set, *Go Fish* is a sweetly romantic and refreshingly authentic story about a circle of friends in Chicago. Unlike many lesbian features, the women here actually look like dykes (no small thing for us image-starved moviegoers). *Go Fish* centers on the courtship of aspiring writer Max (Guinevere Turner, who co-wrote the script with Troche) and quiet, skittish Ely (V.S. Brodie). The women engage in regular date-type activities like dinner and a movie before progressing to more imaginative foreplay...nail clipping.

The story, set on a college campus, is narrated by a clean-cut, studious lad named Eddy (Josh Charles) who finds himself paired with a roommate from hell—Stuart (Stephen Baldwin), a beer-guzzling, frat-boy type prone to ogling women and ignoring the books. In voiceover, Eddy recounts his mixed feelings about Stuart and—right from the start—hints at the "sexual deviance" to come. *Threesome* makes no bones about its Wildean set-up. If Eddy and Stuart sound awkward saying, respectively, "I'm a fag" and "It's okay if you're a homo," it's not because the lines ring false; it's because Hollywood movies have rarely allowed such unapologetic pronouncements.

When a third wheel, Alex (Lara Flynn Boyle), bursts in on the frolicking fellows, *Threesome* threatens to sink in a mire of cuteness. It seems a bureaucratic error has landed female Alex in the same dorm suite with male Stuart and Eddy. After a few regrettably sitcomish gags, the movie settles into a low-key, mostly funny rhythm of Eddy-wants-Stuart, Stuart-wants-Alex, Alex-wants-Eddy. (Believe me, it's not as dippy as it sounds.) When the roommates finally end up in the altogether, all together, the scene is believably tremulous and touching. In this context, "queer" means affection that transcends sexual identity. *Threesome* champions the kind of love, sexual and otherwise, that has the staying power to last a lifetime.



(L-R) Alexis Arquette and Carlton Wilborn in *Grief*, directed by Richard Glatzer

Their matchmaking friends, enmeshed in their own soapy dilemmas, occasionally lapse into overly cute roundtable discussions. But aside from this periodic self-consciousness, and too many affectless line readings by the mostly novice actors, *Go Fish*—filmed in grungy-chic black and white—is a brash and understated charmer.

Threesome, from writer-director Andrew Fleming, is another prime example of the "no big deal" trend in queer representation. Not to be confused with the gimmicky (and awful) *Three of Hearts*, another studio release from a few years back featuring a different Baldwin brother, *Threesome* is a pleasing, contemplative three-character drama that at times has the feel of a stage play. The thing I like best about the movie is its deft recreation of a particular moment in young adulthood when everybody seems like a potential fuck partner. The thing I like second best is its depiction of friendship as something to be cherished. Nobody in the film ends up coupled, but the bond between friends is embraced as a vital connection, as important and enduring as the one shared between lovers.

Yet another permutation on love and friendship is uncorked in *Salmonberries*, Percy Adlon's almost indescribably strange film from 1991 that's finally earned a theatrical release (in some cities, it's also available on video). Notable for showcasing our own k.d. lang in the lead role, *Salmonberries* is an indulgent mess that nonetheless offers some genuinely stirring scenarios of vulnerability and desire. lang plays Kotzebue, an Alaskan pipeline worker of uncertain heritage who falls for a German emigre, Roswitha (Rosel Zech), the librarian

in a remote town. Roswitha first sees Kotzebue as a bad-tempered boy, until Kotzebue (literally) steps between the library stacks and—later—courts the older woman with the gift of a freshly captured fish. Roswitha reciprocates by showing off her collection of salmon-colored berries, artfully arranged in jars that line the walls of her eerily lit bedroom.

Writer-director Adlon (*Sugarbaby*, *Bagdad Cafe*) may have been aiming for a multitedited story about identity and dislocation, but the film never settles long enough on either woman's yearning to make much sense of their supposed pain. Nor does the woozy camera work signal more than creative good intentions gone awry. But as a meditation on unrequited love, *Salmonberries* captures the same kind of angsty alienation rendered so achingly in Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* (and never allowed to fully blossom in his disappointing *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*).

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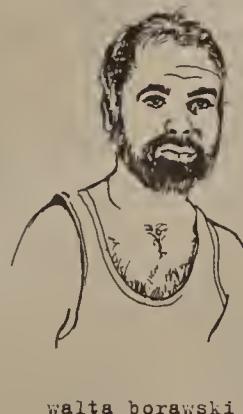
WHAT IS OUR LOSS? WHAT IS OUR FEAR?: AIDS, ART, AND CULTURE

by Michael Bronski

THE NAMES come at you randomly, unexpected. An obituary in the *New York Times* over morning coffee and an English



john preston



walta borawski



derek jarman



ron vawter



marlon riggs

muffin. Running into someone on the street as you rush to do a last minute errand before going to a meeting. An early morning phone call. A message on the machine when you come back from the movies. As we move out of the first decade of the AIDS epidemic, death is still always with us. It may be more expected now, even more casual, at times it seems inevitable: men and women we know are going to die of AIDS. It is a fact of life, it is what it means to be living now. It happens so often that sometimes we have not the time or the hour, the will or the patience to stop and think, to ponder: what is our loss, what is our fear?

Since Stonewall the very *idea* of queer community and culture has always been in a state of flux. Certainly community and culture existed in the 1960s and '50s and '40s; Gay Liberation gave a clearer focus and a sustained politics to queer lives. Since then that focus and politics have expanded their meanings, enlarged their parameters. We have moved quickly and far, traversed ground we could only barely imagine a scant decade or so ago. Our community structures are more grounded, more complex than ever before. Our sense of purpose and identity is more complicated, more intricate than we had ever envisioned possible. And yet when death appears — as it does daily — in our lives we are faced with a reality that confounds our analysis, permits us only to cry, or mourn or grieve. "What is going to happen to us?" I once heard Larry Kramer ask at a rally. The question reverberated throughout the crowd — it was half rhetorical, half not; partly declamatory, partly a plea. It made people uncomfortable, uneasy. There was no answer — certainly no easy answer. The enormous discomfort came not from the lack of knowing what to do but rather from the realization that, on some basic level, we did not know how to think about this. "What is going to happen to us?" The question's very open-endedness was what made it unsettling. What is going to happen to any of us, you might ask. The answer is, of course, death. But that is almost besides the point. The topic is AIDS and gay men; and although death here seems to be implicit, the social consequences and the cultural implications of life cut short by this epidemic are quite different. What is going to happen to our community? To our culture? To our collective lives? What is happening to us now?

While all deaths — deaths from AIDS, or anything else — are important, the deaths of gay artists occupy a specific place in our culture, in our times. And the deaths of gay artists imply, more concretely than other deaths, that something more has been lost. The loss of the gay artist — the performer, poet, novelist, pornographer, filmmaker, diarist, journalist, activist

and critic — resonates even more within us because these are the people to whom we have turned to *see* ourselves. Larry Kramer's cry of "What is going to happen to us?" was, to a large degree, about the fate of gay culture, gay art. What is the effect of so many gay artists dying? What does it mean for us — as individuals, as well as a community? Can we, should we, calculate the loss? Do we even know what the real losses are? Are we affected in ways we may not realize? What is the ultimate effect this all has on our culture; on our visions, dreams, futures and even our ability to think about and evaluate our lives?

In the past three months we have lost at least six important, celebrated gay male artists none of whom reached the age of 50: filmmakers Marlon Riggs and Derek Jarman, novelist John Preston, playwrights and theatrical instigators Terry Helbing, Ron Vawter, as well as my own lover of nineteen years the poet Walta Borawski. But such simple delineations as "novelist" or "poet" does not do credit to the complexity of the work of these men. They were all social critics, John Preston was as noted for his essays and anthologies as for his novels; Marlon Riggs did vital work exploring the complexities of race in US culture; Walta Borawski was an essayist and critic as well as a poet; Ron Vawter was instrumental in building and sustaining an alternative theater in Manhattan; gay theater, as we know it today, would not have existed without the work of Terry Helbing twenty years ago; Derek Jarman was a diarist and activist who had committed himself to gay liberation and gay politics until his death. What are we to make of the loss of these six men in just three months? How are our lives going to be different because they are no longer with us? How do we go on creating a gay culture? What have they given us? What have we lost?

The problem with calculating loss is that you are dealing in a limitless, non-finite quantity. Loss multiplies geometrically, it defies simple arithmetic, simple subtraction. Once you attempt to consider what you have lost with the deaths of gay artists the bottom line careens out of control. Larry Kramer's question — "what will become of us?" — registers so high because like the calculations of loss it is infinite.

But all of this does not address the real desire to understand what happens when gay artists die. The immediate loss is, of course, the loss of their company. When someone dies the loss is perhaps felt keenest by those who knew them — lovers, friends, business associates, political companions, fellow activists. And when we know many who have died these losses become intermingled, amplifications of one

another. Not receiving my twice weekly phone calls from John

Preston, or the very occasional note from Terry Helbing are not small in relationship to losing Walta, they are variations on the same theme, *leitmotifs* of sorrow that resonates on levels sometimes out of the range of expected hearing.

But it is not only this physical, everyday — or twice weekly, or every couple of years — loss that registers. It is also the loss of collaboration, of the shared intellectual process. Walta's thinking and vision influenced everything that I wrote. My phone calls and visits with John Preston were often filled with sharing ideas, comparing notes, fleshing out half-thought theories and plans. Such a process must have been even more vitally felt with someone like Marlon Riggs who — together with other African-American artists such as Essex Hemphill, Assoto Saint, Melvin Dixon, and Afro-British filmmaker, Isaac Julien — were involved in creating embattled new visions of what it means to be queer and a Black man in Western culture. Despite what some people would have you believe, no artist works in isolation. It is simply impossible, even if you speak to no one else, to be completely isolated from community and history, shared life and shared feeling. This is even more true of gay artists, especially those gay artists who define themselves as part of a community. And most particularly those artists who are members of a minority within a community. What we lost when Marlon Riggs died was not only a filmmaker, but someone who was part of a giant, collaborative process that involved many, many other artists of color. His thread in that tapestry of thinking, writing, planning, discussing, and producing art is now missing. It is irreplaceable, and although we might be able to postulate what Marlon might have thought — the way we can image how Maria Callas might have sung a certain role, or how Billie Holiday would have sounded if she had lived to sing a popular new song — we will never really know.

But the death of an artist affects not only their immediate relationships but a far wider group: their audience. It is difficult to know the extent or the parameters of an audience. Walta would always run into people who had read his poems fifteen years earlier. John Preston would meet men who had read porn stories he had written under pseudonyms a decade before. Marlon Riggs's work appeared on

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APPROACHING STONEWALL

From the City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves

by Marc Stein

"It may well be the case that years from now, when social historians write their accounts of the homophile movement, June 28, 1969 will be viewed as a turning point in the fight for equality for homosexuals." This was the prescient declaration of Philadelphians Carole Friedman and Ada Bello, writing in the *Homophile Action League Newsletter* shortly after the Stonewall riots.

In 1994, however, as we mark the 25th anniversary of Stonewall, the rebellion is rarely characterized as a *turning point* in the homophile movement. Instead, it is most often depicted as the first act of lesbian/gay political resistance ever. While younger African-American, student, peace, and women's movement activists in the 1960s either critiqued or dismissed the value of earlier activism, perhaps in no movement was a prior tradition of political organizing so completely denied.

raid on a meeting called to establish a chapter of the national Mattachine Society, the group founded in Los Angeles in 1950. In 1962, after Mattachine's headquarters severed ties to local chapters, Philadelphians founded the Janus Society, named for the two-faced Roman god. Like Mattachine Philadelphia, and unlike most Mattachine chapters elsewhere, Janus was initially led by a lesbian president and featured mixed-sex leadership and membership.

Philadelphia's unique mixed-sex political organizing changed after Clark Polak became Janus president in late 1963 and the group began publishing *DRUM* magazine in 1964. Edited by Polak and named for Henry David Thoreau's "different drummer," *DRUM* combined hard-hitting news and features, the raw, risqué, and campy comic strip "Harry Chess," and male physique photography. Reviled by much of the more "respectable" homophile movement, *DRUM*

In the name of fighting so-called obscenity, government agencies conducted an ongoing campaign of surveillance against not only Janus activists in Philadelphia but also readers of *DRUM* around the country. Richard Schlegel, the founder of a Janus chapter in Harrisburg, lost his high-level job as the Pennsylvania Department of Highways's Director of Finance in 1965 after the results of postal monitoring of his mail were revealed to his superiors. Beginning in 1966, the Post Office examined Polak's outgoing mail, used test purchases with the cooperation of various bookstores, newsstands, and individuals, and examined the contents of "broken" packages mailed by Polak around the country.

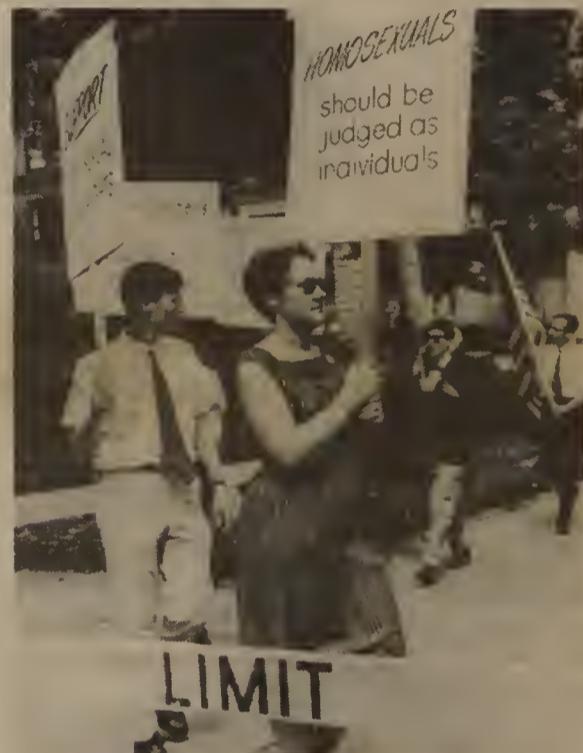
While the federal government was monitoring Polak's activities, local law enforcement officials proceeded apace. Philadelphia police, routinely using faulty search warrants and conducting unconstitutional seizures of Polak and Janus's property, in one case found approximately 75,000 "homosexual oriented books and periodicals" and a mailing list "conservatively estimated to contain over 100,000 names." Arrested time and time again, and facing increased harassment, Polak announced in a letter to Janus



Anita Cornwell's groundbreaking essays were collected in this Naiad Press edition in 1983. The earliest pieces date from 1971-72 and were published in *The Ladder*. Cornwell participated actively in Philadelphia's Radicalesbians group, which was founded in 1971.



Kiyoshi Kuromiya (left) founded Philadelphia's Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in 1970. While racial conflict led non-whites in GLF-NY in the summer of 1970 to form a separate group, Third World Gay Revolution (TWGR), Philadelphia GLF was multiracial. This photograph appeared alongside a statement written by Third World Gay Revolution in *The Gay Dealer*, which appeared after gay liberationists took over Philadelphia's *Plain Dealer*. (*The Gay Dealer*, October 1970)



Philadelphia's Barbara Gittings marches in the homophile movement's Annual Reminder demonstration at Independence Hall on July 4. The first Reminder took place in 1965. The last one was held just days after the Stonewall riots in 1969. (Kay Lahusen)

Uncovering the resistance of lesbians and gay men in the years leading up to Stonewall helps us to understand the making of social movements. By decentering the location of lesbian/gay activism to the many cities engaged in what we now view as movement building, we can better understand that Stonewall was not the beginning, the first act, but a crucial moment that was taken up as a symbol of resistance by activists around the world.

The history of lesbians and gay men in Philadelphia in the years before and just after the Stonewall rebellion, for example, reveal a complicated and complicating picture of homophile and liberationist activism.

The Janus Society and DRUM Magazine

Organized "homophile" activism began in Greater Philadelphia in 1960 with an unprecedented police

attempted to politicize gay men seeking pleasure and "pleasurize" gay men practicing politics. Located somewhere between respectable homophile publications such as *Mattachine Review*, *ONE*, and *The Ladder* on one side and male physique magazines on the other, *DRUM*'s sexual liberationism in the pre-Stonewall era challenges students of lesbian/gay history to think more critically about what exactly makes Stonewall the turning point that it was.

Just seven weeks before the riots, *DRUM* ceased publication. More than 10 years later, after filing a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, Polak would learn the details of the coordinated campaign of repression that had been waged against him, Janus, and *DRUM*, as well as the pornographic Trojan and Beaver Book Services and bookstores that he owned. Beginning in 1964, Polak, Janus, and *DRUM* were targeted by US Customs, the Post Office, and federal, state, and local law enforcement officials, including then Philadelphia District Attorney, now US Senator Arlen Specter.

members and *DRUM* subscribers dated May 5, 1969, "There will be no further issues of *DRUM*." Ultimately, Polak would face two sets of indictments on federal obscenity charges. In 1972, Polak agreed to a plea bargain arrangement under which he was fined \$5,000 and placed on probation for five years with the condition that he no longer engage in the business of mailing "non-mailable matter."

Returning to the controversies that swirled around *DRUM* in the 1960s makes it quite clear that gay activists did not wait for Stonewall to join the sexual revolution. Nor did lesbians and gay men engage in their first full-fledged sex war in the 1970s. Finally, the federal campaign against *DRUM* demonstrates that the police raid on the Stonewall Inn was not necessarily the worst example of legal repression faced by lesbians and gay men in the spring and summer of 1969.

July 4, 1969

Philadelphia's first homophile demonstration was a successful May 1965 sit-in at Dewey's restaurant, organized by the Janus Society to protest the denial of service to cross-dressers. Several weeks later, as part of the homophile movement's turn to direct action, activists organized their first picket at Independence Hall. Distancing themselves from Janus's Dewey's sit-in, and conforming to conventional sex-gender norms, the leaders of the Annual Reminder required female participants to wear dresses and male participants to wear jackets and ties.

Local participants in the 1965 and 1966 Reminders, in addition to Janus members, included members of a revived Mattachine-Philadelphia chapter, which was founded by lesbians opposed to Polak. In 1967, lesbian members of a new Philadelphia chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), the women's group founded in San Francisco in 1955, joined in. After a March 1968 police raid on Rusty's, the most popular lesbian bar in Philadelphia, members of the local DOB chapter voted unanimously to regroup and form a more militant and a mixed-sex organization, which they called the Homophile Action League (HAL). Members of HAL participated in the 1968 and 1969 Annual Reminders.

As forms of lesbian/gay political action, the contrast between drag queens and bar patrons rioting in

Organizers backed the order. "His face puffy with indignation and yelling," historian Martin Duberman reports, Washington's Frank Kameny told the couple "None of that! None of that!" and angrily broke their hands apart." Gittings explained "There is a time and a place for holding hands... On a picket line—no." New York's Craig Rodwell objected: "Our message is that homosexual love is good. Holding hands is not inappropriate.... If you don't change, you're going to be left behind.... There's a generation gap among homosexuals, too." *The Distant Drummer* reported that Rodwell and his lover then began "defiantly marching hand in hand." Soon two young lesbian couples did likewise.

It is tempting to regard the generational conflict that erupted at the 1969 Annual Reminder as proof that the Stonewall riots, in and of themselves, were a watershed. But it may be more valuable to focus on what happened in the months after Stonewall to understand how the riots came to be understood as a turning point. New Yorkers returning home from the Annual Reminder joined together with other leftists, counterculturalists, drag queens, and women's liberationists to create the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in New York. In the immediate post-Stonewall era, homophile activists and gay liberationists across the country worked to harness the political energies released by the Stonewall riots, beginning the process through which Stonewall has come to be regarded as a revolution.

be moved both in time and location." This demonstration would have "no dress or age regulations." Broidy proposed replacing the July 4th pickets with an annual Christopher Street Liberation Day to commemorate the Stonewall riots, an idea that seems to have originated with Rodwell. On this proposal, radicals won the day, winning a unanimous vote with one abstention. This early demonstration of the symbolic power of Stonewall could not have been clearer: the lesbian/gay movement's largest annual demonstrations would no longer be held on the nation's birthday in the nation's birthplace, but would instead mark "gay liberation's birthday" in its "birthplace."

Radicals were less successful with their antiwar resolutions. The conference approved 54-6 a resolution urging lesbians and gay men to take part in the November 15 antiwar mobilization in Washington and "to do so as homosexuals." But a second resolution calling for ERCHO to endorse the mobilization was defeated 27-35.

On a third set of resolutions, the radicals won a victory. As amended, the resolutions declared that "inalienable human rights" included (1) "Dominion over one's own body" through "sexual freedom without regard to orientation" and "freedom to use birth control and abortion," (2) "Freedom from society's attempts to define and limit human sexuality," and (3) "Freedom from political and social persecution of all minority groups," which was said to include "freedom and the right of self-determination of all oppressed minority groups."

In the wake of the ERCHO conference, Philadelphia lesbian and gay activists had an opportunity to reflect on the issues that divided them from radical gay liberationists. By early 1970, HAL was describing that what had seemed like ERCHO's "marriage" with the left was "perhaps little more than an impulsive flirtation." The newsletter reported that HAL, along with five other groups represented at the ERCHO conference, had taken advantage of rules allowing member organizations to dissociate themselves from ERCHO decisions.

In the coming years, as the Stonewall riots came to be seen as the founding event of the lesbian/gay movement, the Annual Reminders would often be forgotten. Few of the millions who would march in New York's annual "pride" parade commemorating the riots would be aware that the origins of their celebration lay in a small band of respectable lesbians and gay men who marched in front of Independence Hall on the fourth of July for five consecutive years. Ironically, today, when lesbian/gay pride parades mark the anniversary of Stonewall around the country, Philadelphia's celebration remains among the smallest of those held in large U.S. cities.

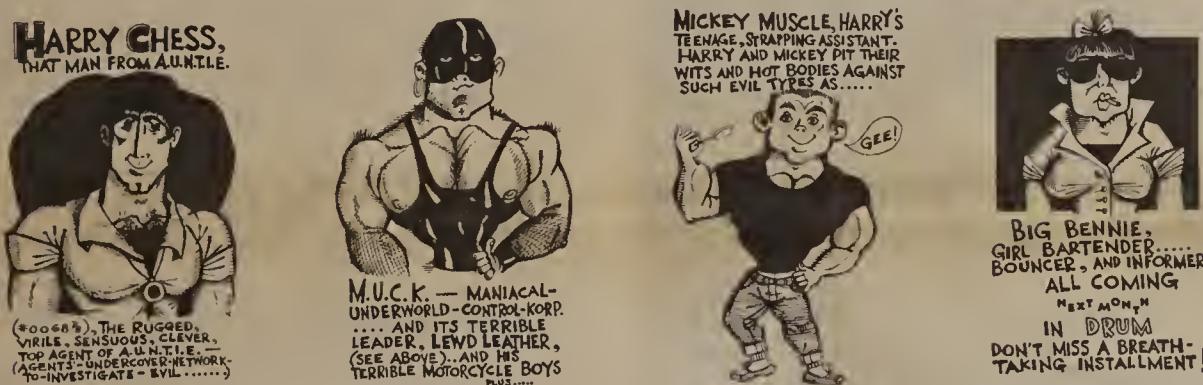
Toward the 25th Anniversary of Gay Liberation and Radicalesbianism in Philadelphia

When a GLF formed in Philadelphia in June 1970, three characteristics distinguished the group from its predecessors in GLF-NY. First, as founding member Kiyoshi Kuromiya has explained, GLF-Philadelphia rejected the idea that gay liberation was "a political struggle of an oppressed minority," believing instead that *all people* should come out as lesbian or gay.

Building on the Radicalesbians-New York (RL-NY) position paper, "The Woman-Identified Woman," GLF-Philadelphia's statement of purpose proclaimed that "homosexual love is the most complete form of expression between two members of the same sex."

Second, GLF-Philadelphia was truly multiracial. Hundreds of African-American lesbians and gay men

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Between 1964 and 1969, the Philadelphia-based Janus Society published *DRUM* magazine, which featured a raw, risqué, and campy comic strip by A. Jay entitled "Harry Chess." The comic was introduced in the March 1965 issue (shown above). (A. Jay)

Greenwich Village and well-dressed lesbians and gay men peacefully picketing in Philadelphia couldn't have been greater. As had been the case in previous years, demonstration planners in 1969, including Philadelphia's Barbara Gittings, the founder of New York's DOB chapter (1958), the former editor of *The Ladder* (1963-66), and a member of HAL, spoke a language of patriotic respectability. Gittings told a reporter from *The Philadelphia Tribune*, an African-American newspaper, that "We are here today to remind the American public that in its homosexual citizens, it has one large minority who are still not benefitting from the high ideals proclaimed for all on July 4, 1776."

Judging by *The HAL Newsletter*, *The Tribune*, and *The Ladder*'s coverage, the demonstrators were a unified group of lesbians and gay men. But Philadelphia's leftist *Distant Drummer* reported on a "dispute" that "arose between the marchers themselves—over the issue of holding hands on the picket line." Pitted against the older lesbian-gay alliance that had been responsible for the July 4th pickets since 1965 was a younger group of lesbians and gay men much affected by events at Stonewall. *The Distant Drummer* reporter explained that while he was talking to demonstration leaders, a "breathless young man came running up to tell them that two girls had been ordered not to hold hands while marching."

From the Annual Reminder to Lesbian/Gay Pride

When the Eastern Regional Conference of Homophile Organizations (ERCHO) met in Philadelphia, November 1-2, 1969, the new movement for "gay liberation" had not yet found an institutional vehicle in Philadelphia. So when radical gay liberationists clashed with homophile activists, Philadelphians, who had been on the radical cutting edge of their movement for at least half a decade, found themselves attacked as conservative.

From the start, the meeting was marked by conflict. In one instance, for example, GLF-NY opposed the reading of a letter addressed to the conference from Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo, who "commended the homosexuals on their conduct during the annual fourth of July demonstration in front of Independence Hall," praise that undoubtedly infuriated radicals. Extended debate focused on three issues: the Annual Reminder, participation in the upcoming anti-Vietnam war mobilizations, and a series of radical resolutions.

Craig Rodwell and Ellen Broidy proposed "That the Annual Reminder, in order to be more relevant, reach a greater number of people and encompass the ideas and ideals of the larger struggle in which we are engaged—that of our fundamental human rights—

THE STATUS QUO OF THE STATUS QUEER

by Urvashi Vaid

This is a revised version of a talk presented to "Stonewall At 25...And Beyond" a conference held at Harvard Law School, April 9, 1994. © 1994 Vaid

We are witness to remarkable change in the status quo of the status queer. On the national political front, our two decade old battle for political access and cultural recognition has been won: we have achieved both to an unparalleled extent. We have front-door access to the top politicians in the land — including the President. Federal agencies have re-written their policies to ban discrimination in the workplace. Our political organizations are larger, more sophisticated and more stable than ever before. And the extremist Right's ballot measures have finally brought money and support to organizers who have argued for a decade that we must re-focus the national movement from Washington DC to state capitols, local towns and the grassroots where people in our communities live and work.

On the cultural front, no less "straight" an authority than *Newsweek* has declared lesbians chic, *Ikea* now features an explicitly gay male couple furniture shopping in a TV commercial, and the pinnacle of one form of popular culture — the Academy Awards — witnessed a straight man praising the impact two gay teachers had on his life as role models. I only wish Vito Russo had been alive to see it.

But when I consider this situation, I find myself feeling very uneasy. What unnerves me is not at all the success that so many of us worked so hard to realize. It is instead our lack of a vision of what to do with our new access and visibility. For so long we were so marginal that those two objectives seemed unattainable. Now that we seem to have them, what unnerves me is the question of what lies beyond access and visibility? Where do we go from here?

I'd like to offer three suggestions. The first concerns the unfinished business of building a powerful, grassroots, political movement rooted in notions of Liberation and not merely Rights. The second, concerns the need for us to critically analyze both the mainstream's embrace of us and its lingering, underlying resistance to us. And the third, is the need for us to stop being silent about the resurgence of racism, sexism and chauvinism in our movement, and in gay/lesbian communities.

Re-Building A Liberation Movement

Now that we have access, we must revisit the task some of our predecessors began in the 1960s and 1970s — the task of imagining how we want the institutions of the new society we create to look. I see this as a theoretical challenge — a void in theory, being addressed in the academy, but inaccessible to many activists. But liberation is not merely a theory, it is a practice guiding decisions on strategy, priorities, and tactics. A liberation ideology does not guide our decisions today. Instead, we are guided by the more limited (if powerful) framework of Rights. Gay and lesbian political access — or legitimacy — has been a paramount goal of the civil rights movement and its national, state and local organizations. When Gay Activists Alliance started in 1969, politicians treated us like pariahs. By the 1992 Presidential campaign, we helped deliver nearly \$4 million dollars and some say one out of six votes to elect Clinton.

Our civil rights movement won some important

legislative gains in the early 1990s. But, the events of 1993 exposed the political access this civil rights movement has won to be toothless. The moral of the loss of the military policy fight is not that it was the wrong issue to fight. The moral of 1993 is two-fold: first, that our strategy to advance politically was extremely naive and dangerous; and second, that our civil rights movement lacked the muscle to win its goals.

On closer examination, the military fight reveals that we relied too heavily on the mediation and assurance of individuals with political access to broker a relationship between the civil rights movement and the new Administration. We relied in particular on people like David Mixner, David Geffen, Andrew Barrer, and other rich men and women who had raised funds for Clinton and who expected to get a payback in the form of visible gay and lesbian appointments and policy changes. But when the going got tough, these folks disappeared: Mixner abandoned the group he

By aspiring to join the mainstream rather than continuing to figure out the ways we need to change it, we risk losing our gay and lesbian souls in order to gain the world.

was instrumental in creating (CMS); Geffen and others did not come through with the funding that CMS hoped for. And because many of these people were newcomers to political processes they did not understand, they created something we did not really need: CMS. And they structured it in a way that inhibited it from doing the job it was designed to do: it became a competitor with existing groups, and the national organizations wasted huge amounts of time fighting over turf, credit and control, instead of finding a way to work together.

The second lesson is one that we have been unwilling to face: access, money and invitations to the table will not alone win policy changes. We are not ready to engage in center stage politics on gay, lesbian and even AIDS issues. The "so-called" gay and lesbian 90s makes a nice marketing slogan and news media headline, but it is a lot of hot air. We need votes, constituents, supporters, and above all, a deeper understanding of the difference we represent, all of which we lack today. To build meaningful political power, we need to rethink and restructure our national political movement. What is its purpose? Can it ever do what needs to be done at the state and local level?

For several years, I have argued NGLTF must create a strong movement in every state with the task of doing education, gay and lesbian organizing, and legislative advocacy. This state movement needs to be networked into a national federation, with a democratic structure, a commitment to local autonomy and control and a level of accountability that our current organizations lack.

Second, from our experience on Capitol Hill since the late 1980s, it is clear that the federal lobby known as the Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRCF) needs to be radically reconfigured to be more effective. HRCF was predicated on the notion that money would buy access. It has. But now what? HRCF has no answer. Its Board needs to wake up and ask the community for some input and get some answers. Such answers would include hiring more lobbyists and eliminating programs that duplicate organizing better done by others; developing more effective long-term strategies on how to defeat anti-gay maneuvers; developing affirmative long-range legislative goals; and building a more powerful PAC function through integration of federal and local PACs.

Third, the legal and political movements need to work more closely together than they ever have. Just read about the political way in which the legal cases on access to birth control counseling and sex education were brought. Coordination of this type *does* exist *within* the legal movement. But coordination *between* the legal, legislative and political teams in our movement does not exist.

Finally, I would suggest that before we go about changing the hearts and minds of the "middle section" of the straight population, we had better shore up and build our own home base: we need to find ways to tap into the political energies, aspirations and needs of the millions of people who have come out, who live out, but who are not in fact organized into a political movement.

The Mainstream

A second challenge we face is how to understand with critical eyes and a quizzical mind the mainstream moment we find ourselves in. My lover, Kate Clinton closes her show with a sequence I find intriguing. She says, "All this talk about mainstreaming makes me very nervous. 'We're in the mainstream now, we're at the table of power.' If we're at the table of power, where's my knife?" She quotes the writer Grace Paley as saying, "The mainstream is wide and shallow and slow-moving. It's the tributaries where the fun is."

I think Kate is right to question if we are at the table of power — the military fight revealed how far we are from it. Some of us may be invited as guests on some occasions, but we are still not there when the deals are cut.

In my view, the idea that homosexuality is being mainstreamed is an illusion we hunger deeply to believe, because of our years spent in exile. We have every right in the world to demand our place in the heart of the affairs of our nation and broader communities. But to classify the visibility that a relatively small number of people have won as the start of massive integration or "mainstreaming" is to be at once profoundly optimistic and drastically limited in our vision. It minimizes the deep resistance we continue to face. And it begs the question of what exactly it is we rush so eagerly to join as we pursue this metaphoric mainstream.

We live in a world riddled with the belief that homosexuality is immoral, unnatural and sinful. The forces that originate this view, namely the Catholic Church, the Christian Right, Orthodox Judaism, Islam and orthodoxies of every kind, are growing in power and influence. In addition, heterosexuals remain threatened by us for two basic reasons: many

are confused and made uneasy by our gender bending and many are afraid of or repulsed by the non-procreative sexuality we embody.

In this light, we are quite far from being mainstreamed. To do battle on this turf — in the moral, spiritual, and religious realm — is something we can now begin, now that we have won the threshold battle of cultural visibility. I believe strongly that the future of our cultural redefinition of homosexuality lies in our engagement over the next few years with the “moral question” and with organized religion, and the many segments of society it mobilizes. We have waged such a battle to redefine our status in law, culture and public life; but the spiritual domain, as vital and important as it is to so many of us, has not been a major “political” focus of most activists in the movement.

My second problem with mainstreaming is moral. By aspiring to join the mainstream rather than continuing to figure out the ways we need to change it, we risk losing our gay and lesbian souls in order to gain the world. The mainstream has a lot of problems, not the least of which is deep and growing racial division, profound poverty and economic injustice worldwide, and deep-seated sexism. Will making it possible for homosexuals to move from the margin to the center transform these underlying problems? The answer is no. The question then becomes “Is it right for me to want to belong to such a morally bankrupt system?”

Another way to look at this moral dilemma hits even closer to home. The fact that a handful of us get widespread media access and recognition in this gay moment is not a sign of progress for the majority of gay and lesbian people who are not middle class, comfortable, white or urban-based. It does not matter that I have a big fat book contract — the movement is not over because I got mainstreamed. Until it is safe and comfortable for anyone to be a lesbian, a gay youth, a gay man, a bisexual or a drag queen, the movement continues. As more of us move into a space where we can be personally gay or lesbian with a fair degree of impunity, we risk becoming appeased — by a system that keeps others of our brothers and sisters out.

I believe that what we perceive as mainstreaming is little more than a moment in which the heterosexual economy has “discovered” the gay and lesbian market. This discovery of us has been facilitated by the efforts of gay entrepreneurs — from the owners of the national newsmagazine *The Advocate*, to the Overlooked Opinions firm in Chicago. These firms have for years funded surveys, produced market research and promoted the notion that gay people have lots of disposable income and will spend it in places that are friendly to us. This discovery is limited and provisional — the people who most resemble the mainstream are the people most widely promoted by it, as long as they say things acceptable to it.

The gay and lesbian liberation movement has turned into a gay and lesbian marketing movement. Stonewall 25 plans fairs, pavilions, souvenirs, catalogs to “commemorate” the occasion, while voting to ban from the March’s title the very drag queens and transvestites who made history at the Stonewall Inn. Lifestyle magazines keep appearing (*Out, 10 Percent*) while movement driven political papers like *OutLook* and *GCN* falter. We have morning parties, evening parties, tea dances, brunches, women’s dinners, and every imaginable bar-party that draw hundreds of thousands into gay clubs each week, but a political movement is not what is being sold at these functions — another commodity is. I call this commodity false security.

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ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER LESBIANS AND BISEXUAL WOMEN ORGANIZE

by Jee Yeun Lee

“Exoticize my fist”

“Suck my queer Asian pussy”

“My pussy’s queer and it don’t slant”

“Asian dykes suck fuck fist lick”

If you were at the 1993 March on Washington, you might have seen these signs being waved by a loud and visible contingent of Asian and Pacific Islander lesbian and bisexual women (APL&Bs) marching with our gay API brothers. For many of us, it was the first time we were meeting other APL&Bs from around the nation, and it was heartening to see that we were indeed everywhere. In addition to established APL&B groups from major urban areas—Asian Pacifica Sisters (APS) in San Francisco, D.C. Asian Lesbians (DCALs), Asian Lesbians of the East Coast (ALOEC) and South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association (SALGA) in New York—there were also individuals from places like Chicago, Boston, Kansas, Pennsylvania, Southern California, Vancouver, Toronto, Denver, New Mexico, and Seattle. People from these areas with few APL&Bs were amazed to find this gathering of over eighty people, and felt that they were breaking out of their isolation by discovering this emergent national community of APL&Bs, however small.

Isolation is a very real phenomenon. If you live outside major cities, it is often hard to find Asians or Pacific Islanders at all, let alone those who are queer. In 1990, people of Asian and Pacific Islander descent only made up 3% of the total US population, mostly living on the east and west coasts and in Hawaii. Yet living in regions with major API populations can still be an isolating and difficult experience. Like the majority of queer folk, APL&Bs grapple with parental and community expectations to marry someone of the opposite sex and have a traditional family; however, in communities of color, these pressures are often increased by a sense of embattlement that urges its members to carry on its heritage and lineage in the face of racism and assimilation. APL&Bs also face the garden variety of homophobia that all communities express in various ways. Yet although we may find these standards oppressive, we are often reluctant to break these ties completely—many APL&Bs regard our families and API communities as a source of nurturing and strength, and view them as the primary connection to our cultural heritage. We also rely on them for political and personal support when dealing with racism, especially with the recent barrage of anti-immigration sentiment targeting Asians and Latinos.

For support and activism around queer issues, many APL&Bs turn to lesbian communities; however, like other lesbian and bi women of color, we often find ourselves marginalized, tokenized and/or exoticized in political and social groups. When white women make a serious effort to work through issues of

racism and cultural sensitivity, it is usually a precarious balancing act between inclusion and tokenism. High tension on all sides tends to characterize multi-racial political work. In many parts of the US, it can be difficult to find other lesbian and bi women of color to discuss issues like these, let alone other APL&Bs. APL&Bs thus find ourselves without personal support or a political mobilization that will address our specific concerns.

Creating a National Network

Conditions like these brought over fifty APL&Bs together to march as a contingent in the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Earlier that year there had been a west coast retreat for APL&Bs held in northern California, the first of its kind, but the ’87 March was the first time that APL&Bs came together from around the nation. At this gathering, women discussed the possibility of formally organizing beyond personal contacts. As Doreena Wong, one founder of the network, says: “We looked around and said why haven’t we done this before, we should plan it next time, and that’s why we decided to do the retreat.” With a grant from the March on Washington Committee, a meeting was held the next year where they decided to plan the first-ever national retreat for APL&Bs. Thus began the “Asian Pacific Lesbian Network” (APLN), renamed in 1993, the “Asian and Pacific Islander Lesbian and Bisexual Women’s Network” (APLBN).

From the beginning, APLBN has been a loose coalition of regional groups and individuals, building a network from the bottom up. Wong explains, “Rather than having a national organization claim to represent the various parts of the community, the way we came together was quite the opposite, more from the grassroots level. There was already organizing going on in different local regions, and we realized that we could come together and maintain each local group’s autonomy...” This approach doesn’t come without its difficulties: since there is no central decision-making body, it is necessary to get input from the various groups and individuals involved in order to make key decisions. However, despite the logistical nightmares this sometimes entails, most organizers feel that it is necessary and, in the end, worth the effort to make APLBN accountable to its constituents.

APLBN is still a new and growing network. APL&Bs are a wildly diverse bunch with very different concerns, yet there are common threads underlying our goals and visions. At the most basic level, a national

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RAISE DOLLARS BEFORE HOPES: A STONEWALL 25 FIASCO

by V. K. Aruna

"Our goal is to mobilize the largest human rights march and rally the world has ever seen . . . On June 26, 1994 we shall proclaim to the world that we are an international movement with the collectively avowed task of eradicating homophobia not only from our own villages, cities, provinces and nations, but from the entire planet."

"STONEWALL 25 will be "like no other event staged in the history of our movement The entire spectrum of lesbian and gay people worldwide will be involved. People from around the globe will be marching for their rights, regardless of nationality or race [The rally] will be a world-class, professionally-staged event with global implications and an international message."

On some level these sentiments are very American—to have a human rights march that is meant to be the biggest, the best, the most spectacular. Grand like the Statue of Liberty celebrations. Dazzling like the Bicentennial Gala. Except this event will be an international affair involving international participation, where the call for justice and the clamor for human

disappointment for the lesbians in Asia who were planning to come. It's a big disappointment for us because we wanted them to come."

Although the Stonewall steering committee slashed and eventually admitted it had no international scholarship funds, as late as March 1994, it sent its international outreach organizers on a \$10,000-trip to Asia and Australia to recruit participants for the New York events. Yasmin Tambiah, a Sri Lankan lesbian currently in the US, echoes what so many of us in ALN-USA believe, "How do they expect a Third World lesbian activist to raise airfare to the US when it constitutes her salary for six to ten months? How will she fundraise for so much money and what will she tell people she is fundraising for? So you end up with mostly rich people coming to this event, therefore perpetuating the stereotype that only socially privileged lesbians and gay men are willing to be out, willing to participate in an event like Stonewall 25, and are able to live out their lesbian and gay life publicly."

When word of scholarship cuts reached ALN-USA,

not called to help with international outreach, and it's appalling that the only people Stonewall organizers recruited to help them was Asians and Friends [a group of predominantly white men with Asian boyfriends] and one guy from Los Angeles who is not tied to the Asian lesbian and gay community."

Kwong adds, "People in the US don't make the connection between international and US gay liberation issues. [For instance] who cares about lesbians from Malaysia? Who cares about bringing them from Malaysia to New York? The Stonewall 25 commemoration has a wonderful potential for helping Americans understand the significance of an international focus. Unfortunately Stonewall organizers themselves don't know what they want to accomplish. They are not able to articulate why the international focus is important. They seem to think that international only means marching on the United Nations and people living outside the US. They have not tried to work with international communities living right here in New York City."

Not only have Stonewall 25 organizers ignored international communities living in the US, but they have ignored lesbians and gay men of color in the US. When asked about this, some members on the Stonewall steering committee said they could not help it if we did not respond to Stonewall letters of outreach for help with the event. Did they imagine that we would leap to help them when we received their generic outreach letter soliciting help for an event that, to all appearances, was a white gay male extravaganza?

Our reluctance is legitimate given how much lesbians of color are marginalized, tokenized and patronized within the larger gay community. How insightful were Stonewall 25 organizers about this dynamic? Is this why they did not try hard enough to find those of us in the Asian lesbian and bisexual communities living and working across the east and west coasts of the US?

Stonewall organizers themselves don't know what they want to accomplish. They are not able to articulate why the international focus is important

rights will leap off the tongues of 1.5 million lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender peoples of multiple races and ethnicities—"global family in unified action." So the story goes.

A few weeks away from this phenomenal event that has been at least four years in the making, some of us are wondering if we should bag the whole thing. Make a statement by staying home. Refuse to participate in what is quickly turning out to be a farce.

Trinity Ordona, a San Francisco resident and key organizer with Asian Lesbian Network (ALN) USA says, "At first I thought it was just a big American birthday party to which everyone was invited. Then, in January 1994, I got a call from the coordinator of the Stonewall 25 international outreach committee and she wanted us to help them find contacts in Asia for a trip they were making to recruit Asian lesbians and gay men to come to Stonewall."

"We gave the international outreach committee access to key organizers and members of key groups in Taiwan, Thailand, Japan, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Australia and the Philippines. We used our limited resources to contact people in these countries as well as in Malaysia, Singapore, India, Bangladesh and Peru, conveying to them what Stonewall 25 told us—there is scholarship money to help people come to New York. We found 60-70 lesbians from Asia interested in coming to the US. We even took part in Stonewall's scholarship meetings to help them figure out how to disburse the scholarship funds."

"Now we are told, there's no money. So it's a big

the group sent a letter of outrage to the Stonewall 25 steering committee, protesting the committee's 92 percent reduction in funding for international scholarships versus only 50 percent in other areas.

Several comments in response to our letter alluded that ALN needed to do something about bringing Asians over to the US instead of expecting Stonewall to do all the work. Such a response is typical of people with privilege looking for a way out of keeping their word. Frankly, no one in the geographic Third World would have cared if Stonewall organizers had decided to keep the 25th anniversary a US focused event. And it is not as if we are waiting with a begging bowl for American handouts since most Asian lesbians planning to come have been saving up for expenses not covered by scholarships.

The point that angers so many of us is that Stonewall 25 organizers raised hopes before they raised dollars, they made promises before making sure they could deliver. As Tambiah points out, "Stonewall 25 will get a lot of mileage by having an international focus. But in terms of how many lesbians and gay men will come from Asia, Africa and the Middle East, the reality is, not many. And if all that the organizers want is a head count of international participants, then they will get that, irrespective of whether these people are doing something for their communities or not."

Ann Kwong, a main organizer with Asian Lesbians of the East Coast (ALOEC) in New York City says, "There are at least five formal Asian lesbian and gay men's groups in New York City alone . . . But we were

Ordona, Kwong and Tambiah all agree that the most exciting aspect of being in New York this June is the gathering of Asian Lesbians and Bisexual women. [See box with the listing of events.]

According to Ordona, this is the first time Asian American lesbians in the US will have the opportunity to share experiences and meet with Asian lesbians organizing in Asia. She says, "Stonewall 25 has provided us this opportunity but it took us to recognize the potential and work to make it a reality." Currently, ALN is expecting Asian lesbians from Tokyo, Taiwan, India, Thailand, Peru and Canada. Only those from Peru and Tokyo are receiving help from Stonewall via free airline tickets from American Airlines. The lesbian from India is receiving a partial travel stipend from ILGA. Lesbians from Australia, Malaysia and the Philippines are still trying to get here.

In perspective, Stonewall was a significant, active and visible marker in US and gay and lesbian history. Perhaps, other countries will have their Stonewalls; perhaps they will not. As Tambiah reminds us, "History is made differently in each country. Just because we haven't had a Stonewall rebellion, it does not mean that lesbians and gay men in our countries are invisible. The American example does not automatically provide the model for gay liberation or lesbian rights movements around the world." The actions of Stonewall 25 organizers indicate otherwise.

V. K. Aruna, non-immigrant, Black Feminist Lesbian of dual Tamil heritage, born and raised in Malaysia, living and working in the Washington DC area.

INTERNATIONAL SHORTS

Chiapas Uprising Leads to New Investigation of Gay Murders

In the wake of the brilliant Chiapas campaign for human rights and democracy in Mexico, gay activists here have successfully pressed for a renewed investigation into the murders of approximately 25 transvestites and gay men. Following a series of meetings in April between gay activists and Mexican officials, the Governor of Chiapas agreed to appoint an independent investigator, private attorney Jorge Gamboa. The murders covered by Gamboa's investigation occurred between June, 1991 and February, 1993, most of them in Tuxtla Gutiérrez in the state of Chiapas.

Círculo Cultural Gay (CCG), a Mexico-city based group that organized the meetings with officials, has been protesting government complicity and inaction in the murder cases for over two years. Group coordinator Jose María Covarrubias noted that Gamboa's appointment alone does not guarantee a just result. "In the context of Chiapas, where witnesses have good cause to fear testifying, and where not all sectors of the judicial system can be expected to cooperate, the investigation can only succeed if the highest levels of the Mexican government ensure that Gamboa receives all the resources, cooperation and security he needs."

CCG's long battle for local and international attention to the murders has included widely circulated open letters to the Mexican government; the letters were signed by many of the country's leading artists, writers and opposition politicians. There was little official response, however, until after the grassroots uprising on New Year's Day by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN). Demands for land rights and greater autonomy for indigenous people as well as national democratic elections shook the hegemony of the current government and forced renewed attention to human rights violations of all kinds.

The increased pressure for government response to the murders led to an arrest in the case at the end of January. Ignacio Flores Montiel, former coordinator of police forces for the State of Chiapas, was charged in connection with murders of gay men and numerous others, as well as with arms trafficking and kidnapping. CCG reports it has long suspected Flores Montiel of directing some of the brutal murders in Chiapas, most carried out with the high caliber bullets used by police. Some of the murdered transvestites and gay men were also tortured.

Despite the arrest of Flores Montiel, activists continued to push for an independent investigator and for the government's commitment to an impartial inquiry. They pointed to numerous cover-ups in the case, including the earlier conviction of three men now widely regarded as victims of false charges. Two of the men have been released from prison by order of the Chiapas State Supreme Court. One of the men released, Martin Ramon Moguel Lopez, says he was tortured into signing a confession and that his family was threatened. The Mexican government's own National Commission on Human Rights has documented a policy of obstruction of justice on the part of local authorities.

Representatives of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and the International Lesbian and Gay Association joined CCG in the April meetings with officials and have pledged to continue to mobilize international attention as the inquiry proceeds.

Bermuda Lawmakers Vote to Decriminalize Gay Sex

Members of the Bermuda House of Assembly voted last month to decriminalize sexual relations between men aged 18 and over. According to *Reuters*, the measure was approved after a marathon debate and must still pass the Senate to become law. Among those voting against decriminalization was Premier John Swan.

Current law punishes homosexual activity with a ten-year maximum prison sentence. Even "attempted" homosexual contacts can result in up to five years imprisonment.

Bermuda has a constitutional relationship with the United Kingdom that technically obliges it to bring domestic legislation into accord with the provisions of the European Convention of Human Rights, which include "non-discrimination" provisions. Countries that have changed criminal codes to reflect the European Convention standards include Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine and the Isle of Man.

Finland Grants Asylum to Russian Gay Man

Konstantin Gontjarov won political asylum in Finland last year, based on the threat he might face as a gay man if returned to his native Russia. The High Court of Appeal ruled that Gontjarov could face inhumane treatment in Russia and cited his "marriage like condition" with a Finnish man as additional support for asylum. The ruling sets a precedent for limited legal status for homosexual couples.

The High Court verdict came just two weeks before Russia repealed an article in its criminal code outlawing consensual gay male sex. Despite the repeal, a report issued this spring by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission concludes that gay men and lesbians in the Russian Federation are still systematically denied the rights to freedom of speech, association and assembly. It states that lesbians continue to confront forced psychiatric hospitalization and that the government continues to track gay men and maintain files on "known homosexuals."

Hospice for PWAs Terrorized in Bogota

Residents and health workers at a hospice for PWAs in Bogota, Colombia have received death threats and been physically assaulted. Attacks include a firebombing late last year, ongoing vandalism against the two hospice residences and an assault earlier this year by six armed men who looted the buildings and told residents they would be killed if they did not leave the neighborhood.

A representative of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), who visited Colombia in January, reports that "police and the Colombian government have done almost nothing to ensure the safety" of the 30 PWAs staying in the Eudes Foundation hospice.

Foundation director Bernardo Vergara, a Catholic priest, suspects the attackers are members of the local community of Patria who oppose the presence of people with HIV in their neighborhood.

A suit seeking forced relocation of the hospice was filed last year by the Patria neighborhood association. When the petition was rejected by the Colombian courts, who found that the hospice posed no threat to people in the neighborhood, local authori-

ties indicated they would take matters into their own hands.

IGLHRC representatives have met with the Consul General of Colombia in San Francisco to protest the government's failure to protect the residents and workers in the hospice.

Romania to Outlaw Only "Scandalous" Gay People

The Romanian Senate has voted to amend its sodomy law, criminalizing *only* those sexual relations between people of the same gender that "cause public scandal." Under the new legislation, which is expected to pass the Chamber of Deputies shortly, scandalous lesbian and gay contact will be punishable by prison sentences of up to five years.

The legislative amendment is apparently in response to a resolution issued last September by the Council of Europe that called on Romania to repeal its ban on all lesbian and gay sexual activity.

The Romanian Senate also added a new prohibition on attempts to "publicly or privately promote homosexuality." Offenders, which could include anyone working with gay publications or organizations, would face up to five years in prison.

According to Scott Long, a representative of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, the arrest, prosecution, torture and harassment of gay Romanians has not abated since the demise of the Ceausescu regime. At least 57 people are believed to be currently incarcerated on charges of homosexual activity.

Long also reports that the move to outlaw public (and private) discussion of homosexuality comes in tandem with other measures restricting freedom of speech and assembly.

Queer India on Celluloid

The first major gay and lesbian film festival in India will open in December of this year to audiences in Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi. While some Western films are scheduled, the festival intends to focus on images of Indian and Asian gay men and lesbians. The event is co-sponsored by several gay and lesbian groups in India, Frameline, Trikone (a U.S.-based organization of Indian and southeastern Asian gay men), and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC).

A tour of Queer India will coincide with the festival, as will the first ever South Asian conferences on lesbian and gay issues. A gathering in Bombay will primarily address gay men, and a conference for lesbians will take place simultaneously in Delhi. The festival and conferences aim to increase lesbian and gay visibility in India.

Gay groups now exist in Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi. The groups were originally composed of primarily middle class or affluent English speaking men. More recently, however, working class groups of gay men and lesbians have formed. According to IGLHRC, most lesbians and gay men in India currently organize separately.

Trikone (triangle in Hindi) is credited with ending public silence about homosexuality in India. The group, which formed a few years ago, published a report on AIDS and homosexuality in India. After the report was presented to the Parliament, Trikone received over 500 letters from lesbians and gay men in India, and both television and print media began to report on the Indian gay and lesbian movement. Coverage included a cover story in *India Today*, a weekly news glossy. The media's stance is characterized as neutral to positive.

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ROOTS OF “HORIZONTAL HOSTILITY” IN THE LESBIAN & GAY COMMUNITY

by Eric Rofes

[This is an edited speech that was given at the 1993 National Lesbian and Gay Health Conference on July 22, 1993 in Houston, Texas]

THE LESBIAN AND GAY COMMUNITY IS VILIFIED BY much of HetAmeriKa. We drink in their hatred and disgust, and spew it out on each other.

A million queers converge on Washington, D.C. in April and, the following week our own community-based media is filled with complaint after complaint about what went wrong with March organizing. In Colorado, where we lost a vote, and Oregon, where we won, the result is the same. Lesbian, gay and bisexual activists eat each other alive. In Washington as we confront Homo-hatred codified into military law, our national groups trash and undermine one another more intensely than ever and our gay elected officials publicly “dis” the leaders of our community organizations.

Many of us want to deny the severity of “community cannibalism,” that this is the “adult” world of politics and power. By doing so, we perpetuate toxic patterns of interaction and undercut our organizing efforts. City to city, we hear the same complaints: Why are there so many splits and divisions? Why has no charismatic leader taken hold in our community? Why is there so much infighting and sabotaging?

These are not simple questions. They are huge and complex. Deep divisions between us such as sexism, racism and classism are the root system of this sick and diseased tree. So is the core homophobia which has been planted in each of us. And as queer people, we have a profound distrust of authority and leadership. Criticism, offered constructively and with respect, services to strengthen our efforts. Yet many in our community focus their primary efforts on bringing down anything which looks like leadership.

U.S. history is built upon a foundation of independent thinkers persecuted in their homelands and angry rebels railing against the status quo. The decline of trust in leadership accelerated in the sixties with Watergate and Nixon, the assassinations of anyone who exhibited moral leadership on the national level, and the pervasive mendacity surrounding the Vietnam War—all of this, coupled with the demise of critical thinking over the past 30 years, leaves the issue of leadership in America on unstable ground.

Also our movement arose out of the 60s counterculture—hippies, Black Power, women’s liberation—all with anti-leadership and anti-establishment foundations. Lesbians, particularly lesbian-feminists, have brought to the mixed movement a heightened awareness of abuses of power, an analysis of male violence, and the legacy of female socialization. Gay men bring a tremendous covert hostility and competitiveness and many consciously or unconsciously unleash traditional male power dynamics within the movement.

I want to concentrate on the way particular male power dynamics function in gay men. I believe that, more than anything, the inability of gay men to move beyond what I call the “bully/sissy” paradigm, is the foundation for much of the civil war in our communities. Until gay men of all classes and colors come to

terms with our long-stifled but potent formative experiences with male power abuses, we will continue to function as either victims or perpetrators of unethical interpersonal conduct.

The Creation of a Sissy

I tell a personal story to you now, not because it is unique but because it is common. We do not tell this story to our lovers, our colleagues or ourselves.

I knew I was queer when I was a small child. My voice was gentle and sweet. I avoided sports and all roughness. I played with the girls.

I did not fit in to the world around me. I knew the meaning of “heresy” before I entered kindergarten.

face, remain stark and defined on my soul.

When I was a young boy, the bully called me names, stole my bike, forced me out of the playground. I was victim to the ridicule he heaped on me. He made fun of me in front of other children, forced me to turn over my lunch money each day, threatened to give me a black eye if I told adult authority figures. At different times I was subject to a wide range of degradation and abuse—“de-pantsing,” spit in my face, forced to eat dirt.

Today, psychologists are aware of the deep scars which remain on adults who as children had been victims of violent physical abuse, sexual assault and the addiction-based behavior of parents. Little analysis has focused on the impact of boy-to-boy abuse as lived out among social peers. The abuse I suffered created deep psychic scars with which I have struggled throughout my lifetime. These same scars are shared by others. We will never forget that we were tortured and publicly humiliated because we refused to be real boys, acted girlish or were “different.” This was the price we paid for being queer.

As I grew into adolescence, I noticed that the bully could replicate himself. As part of male rites of passage, all boys were presented with a simple choice: suffer daily humiliation or join the ranks of the bully. We all had to answer the question, “Which side are you on?” I watched sweet childhood friends become hard and mean. I saw other sissy boys become neighborhood toughs. They formed gangs of bullies that tormented the rest of us. I began to experience the cycle of abuse which ensures the constant creation of new bullies and I vowed that this would never happen to me. Watching the powerless take on the trappings of power, I’d shake my head and withdraw into deeper isolation. The world of children was a cruel place for me.

Sissy Boys Becoming Gay Men

Fast-forward 25 years to San Francisco. The sissy boy is now a gay man who has sought safety and community at land’s end. He has grown into a tall man with strong features, dark hair and a thick beard. He wears black leather jackets, steel-toed boots, tight T-shirts. His body has strength and definition it never had in its youth. He knows all-too-well that he carries inside the soul of a sissy boy.

It is for this primary reason—my world view as a survivor of the abuse of the bully—that I look at the community around us and reel in horror. All around me, I see the bully/sissy paradigm reenacted. I see gangs of men—once sissy boys themselves—who function as bullies in the rough and tumble of today’s queer community. They choose their targets carefully and publicly name them “wrong” or “bad” or “the enemy.” They muster whatever tactics they can to attack their chosen targets—humiliation, taunts, terrorism and even violence. Just as my childhood bullies put themselves forward as the only acceptable definition of boy values and boy behavior, the queer bullies hold themselves up as the only acceptable definition of queer values and behavior. Those who are different risk becoming target of the bully.

I believe this is a central root of “horizontal hostility” in gay men. I believe most gay men grew up on some level as sissies and that all men in their youth had to choose a role for themselves in this destructive paradigm. When we left home and fled to a safer location, we hoped to leave our sissy identities behind, but we’ve never dealt with the deep scarring of our souls which occurred at the hand of other boys. Instead we threw ourselves into adult lives and tried never to look back. Our unresolved issues are carried into our lives today.

And I see the bully/sissy paradigm lived out time and

the inability of gay men to move beyond what I call the “bully/sissy” paradigm, is the foundation for much of the civil war in our communities

Heresy was a boy who cried a lot when he got hurt. Heresy was a boy who couldn’t throw a baseball. Heresy was a boy putting on girl-clothing. Heresy was me.

As I got older and entered the society of children, I met the key enforcer of social roles among children: the bully. The bully was the boy who defined me as queer to my peers. If they hadn’t already noticed, he pointed out my nonconformity. He was ever-present throughout my childhood, like an evil spirit entering different bodies on different occasions. He haunted me in school, throughout my neighborhood, during synagogue, even at birthday parties. In any group of three or more boys, the bully was present. I know a lot about bullies. I know they have a specific function: they define the limits of acceptable conduct, appearance and activities for children. They enforce rigid expectations. They are masters of the art of humiliation and technicians of the science of terrorism. They wreaked havoc on my entire childhood. To this day, their hand prints, like a slap on the

time again – in every city, in every state, and at the national level. We see groups form which function as bullies and attempt to silence and humiliate the rest of the community. We see dissent stifled, we see unprincipled abusive tactics used against our own people, we see degradation and humiliation heaped onto the community leadership. Those who speak out become the bully's next target.

The way the bully/sissy paradigm reigns in queer America is that it holds hostage specific individuals and populations. Bullies choose a target, define it as "the enemy" and initiate a wide range of abusive tactics. And, as children on the playground looked the other way while the bully did his business, much of the leadership in the lesbian and gay community, averts its eyes while the bully throws his weight around, and thanks god that they themselves are not his target. The bully excuses his unethical tactics, claiming he did it for the good of the community or people are dying or free speech is a bourgeois concept, or the ends justify the means.

Rarely have his tactics been identified and named for what they are: twisted distortions of the original spirit of gay liberation. The bully co-opts euphemisms of "direct action," "community feedback" or "civil disobedience," sacred organizing terms with their roots in ethical social protest. Abuse was not the original moral vision which birthed the spirit of our community. Bullying was not the impulse we embraced in creating Gay Liberation.

As an activist, I know that I carry with me my sissy world-view. It shapes my values and directs my vision. Its memory informs me and keeps me honest.

One incident from childhood I remember as if it were yesterday. Carl, a classmate who shared my sissy status, one day reached the break point. In the middle of class, the bully subtly and covertly taunted Carl. No one knew what he said. No one witnessed it. Yet after years of silent suffering and public humiliation, this incident set Carl over his limit. He snapped like a tall, dry sapling. In one split second, he lost it. He rose from his seat bellowing like a bull gone mad. His words made no sense; he seemed delirious. He rushed to the bully – in full sight of 20 other children and a teacher – and began punching him full-force on the back, howling throughout like a stuck pig.

In an instant, Carl was restrained by the teacher. He was sent from the classroom. The bully remained in his seat, smirking, still in power. He'd received several powerful blows to his back, but he sat there as if he hadn't been touched. He'd lost nothing in the process. We didn't see Carl for a month. He never recovered from the incident, which for years was referred to as "The Day Carl Went Mental."

I think of that incident a lot these days, because I see a queer community gone mad. I see a people of gentle spirit and creative vision using the bully's tactics to force others to submit. I see it when complex issues are simplified into angry graffiti, burned flags and destroyed property. I hear it when gangs of queers, using shrill whistles, attempt to silence public officials or use handcuffs to take hostage our own community leaders. I feel it when we violate the private homes of a straight mayor or a lesbian police lieutenant. I see it and every fiber in me recoils. I see victory for the bully. His abuse has succeeded in recreating us in his image. We do his work for him.

And this is exactly how our enemies win. We do their work for them. Many of our leaders find fighting the Christian Right energizing; we find the fighting within our own community debilitating. These days many of our organizing efforts receive respectful and balanced treatment in the mainstream media; they are

LET'S GO STONEWALL!

by Jennie McKnight

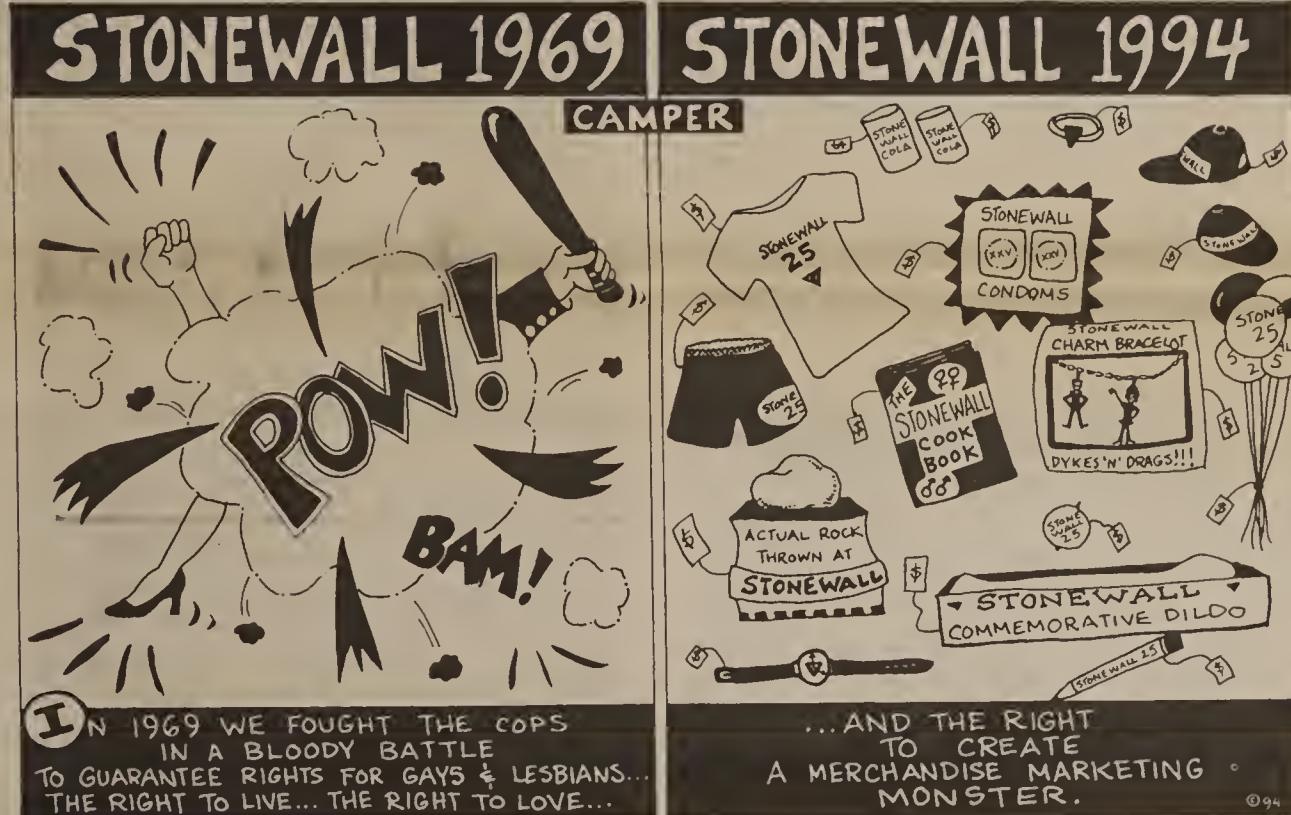
I saw it out of the corner of my eye as I rounded the bend on my way home from work. There, on display in the local liquor store: "Stonewall 25 spring water." I stopped short and stared into the window, utterly depressed at this latest example of the glitz snowballing around the anniversary of the Rebellion. By the time I got home I felt like a veritable lesbian speck, run over by the headlong commodification of queer culture/politics. That night I slept fitfully, dreaming about where "the movement" is headed, where I'm headed.

My lover and I are in the Rainbow Cabin (first class) of Stonewall Air, on our way to the Big Apple for the *event of the century*. Yes, it's STONEWALL/GAMES 1999! We can afford to go, and travel first class, because my lover has sold Disney the film rights to her first lesbian detective novel, and we're overnight millionaires. I swell with *pride* when we arrive in New York and the view from our suite at the Holiday Stonewall Inn overlooks the original site of the historic event.

orientation—a group of straight athletes sued the Games because they were excluded. Consequently, a judge issued an injunction. But competition or no, we're still proud to have Nike as the official athletic shoe of Stonewall/Games!"

Everybody cheers and claps as the image on the screen transforms into a rainbow-colored Nike logo. The narrator continues: "And now, announcing this year's Stonewall/Games theme: 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun!' So go out there and have a terrific weekend!"

In a cab on the way back to the hotel, my lover tells me she's got the inside scoop on the selection of this year's theme. "The Stonewall/Games PR people said marketing studies showed your average consumer associates gay and lesbian people with AIDS and 'special rights,' so they recommended going with a light, fun theme. 'Girls' was chosen because it doesn't sound 'harsh.' The 'just wanna have fun' part fit perfectly because it implies we've moved beyond heavy political issues. As a concession to the 'old



Looming overhead is a huge billboard advertising the movie, "Stonewall Tango." It's sure to draw a big following among gay movie-goers, because it stars Jodie Foster, who is still a leading actress and artistic talent with an ambiguous personal life. I'm only slightly disappointed that at the last minute, after test audiences reviewed the film, Disney made the lead into a bisexual, who, in fact, has a boyfriend through the entire movie.

Anyway, we're really geared up for a fabulous Stonewall/Games weekend with tickets to all the happening events. First is the Nike Kick-Off/Opening Ceremonies. A huge video screen fires up and a narrator takes us through a history of Stonewall/Games:

"After 1994, which was so financially successful, Stonewall Inc. and Gay Games merged, dropped 'gay' to attract broader corporate sponsorship, and became Stonewall/Games. We have not, however, actually had any athletic events since 1997. In the aftermath of passage of the Federal Human Rights Bill—which banned discrimination based on sexual

guard' queers, the executive board agreed to an 'Awareness Festival' on Sunday night where groups still doing political work can sell t-shirts and stuff."

The next morning, we're ready to hit the streets! We slather on some Copperstnewall commemorative sunscreen, don our freedom rings and rainbow baseball caps (and our Stonewall edition Nikes, of course) and head out for the Macy's Stonewall Day Parade! We're excited and full of *pride* as we see tons of other parade-goers on the subway. All of us stop and take a moment to admire each other's clothing and accessories. We run into a problem when the streets are too jammed for us to exit the subway, so we go back to our hotel and watch the parade on TV. Katie Couric and Gregg Gumbel are the network hosts for the events, and we notice they both have tasteful Awareness pins on their lapels.

They're in the middle of a gripping segment on how the money Stonewall/Games made from the TV contract for exclusive coverage of the parade went to found the Stonewall Business School. Our school is continued on page 22

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FROM STONEWALL TO THE PUERTO RICAN PRIDE PARADE: THE EPIC ROLE OF TRANSVESTITES

by Frances Negron

The Stonewall Rebellion of June 29, 1969 marks the mythic origin of the contemporary Gay and Lesbian movement in the US. A sterilized Stonewall (avoiding any mention of the "real" Stonewallers) served as an attractive origin myth because it was a "clear" and spontaneous (some would say "macho") confrontation between a group of non- "politicized" gays and the repressive state embodied by the police. Questions regarding the appropriateness of this mythic origin have also been raised in relation to its "uncharacteristic" violence (the organized gay and lesbian movement has been "primarily" a non violent movement) and to the absence of lesbians. (See Maida Tilchen, "Mythologizing Stonewall," *Gay Community News*, 6/20/89)

The people who had enough that night at the illegally run and "sleazy" Stonewall Inn were the transvestites (the "stereotypical" gay), young and probably homeless gays, working class gays and gays of color (*New York Newsday*, April 13, 1989, p. 22). And among the drag queens of color, at least one, Sylvia Rivera, is a Puerto Rican. Yet, Puerto Rican gays and lesbians in New York and Puerto Rico have rarely claimed the Stonewall of Puerto Rican drag queens, but rather the mythic one, the one invoked and cleansed by the modern "straight-looking" American gay and lesbian movement. Thus, when the *Comunidad Orgullo Gay* (COG) writes about Stonewall in *Pa'Fuera*, there is no mention of the presence of the "stereotypes," although the COG considered itself an "echo"

McKnight continued from page 21

housed in the newly renovated building that used to be the New York Gay and Lesbian Community Center. After an up-close and personal segment about Bob Jones, this year's recipient of the ATT/Advocate Business Scholarship (Jones happens to be straight, but is into making money in the gay community), the parade begins. Leading off is the "Thanks for Loving Us" contingent, composed of straight politicians and celebrities who've been "friends" to our community. My lover and I squeeze each other's hands and get choked up. We're overcome with gratitude to all the straight people who've put their reputations on the line by having anything to do with us.

The next group, the "International" contingent, is shown via aerial shot from the Goodyear blimp, which, for today's parade, sports a lavender lambda painted on the side. We get really choked up as the contingent, dressed in outfits that from above make them look like a rainbow flag, start singing, "We are the World."

We're hoping the cameras go back to the street so we can see some individuals, but the network cuts away to a commercial and then starts reruns of "Cagney and Lacey." (We find out later that the network and advertisers had agreed not to show actual gay people in parade coverage, for fear of lower ratings.)

We hang out in the hotel for a while longer, checking out news coverage of the parade, which consists of a brief blimp shot and the report that "a lot of people had fun today in New York."

Then we shower and get ready to PARTY! Lavender

of Stonewall. [The COG, founded in 1974, was modeled on the then National Gay Task Force and dedicated to bring gays into the mainstream.]

However, a raw account of Stonewall as a mythic origin poses other interesting questions about the participation of gays of color and transvestite gays in both the US and Puerto Rican-based gay and lesbian movements. In fact, the "uncharacteristic" violence of Stonewall may be in itself a middle-class gay and lesbian myth—for both of these other groups, violence is part of everyday living. Sylvia Rivera comments on the rebellion:

"So when I was there the night of Stonewall, it was this wonderful thing, and the queens were ready to be in the front lines because we didn't have too much to lose and we knew about violence, so the drag queens knew how to fight and were early members of the Gay Liberation Front. Miss Marsha and me started our own organization called STAR: Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries. We had a STAR house, a place for all of us to sleep." (Interview in *Stonewall Romances, A tenth Anniversary Celebration pamphlet*, pp. 2-4)

Identical to the mainstreaming US gay and lesbian organizational discourse, all Puerto Rican groups in San Juan and the Latino groups in New York had, at best, an ambivalent attitude towards transvestites. Sylvia Rivera provides an example of the extent to which these "symbols" were marginalized in the US:

Limo Service arrives and whisk us to the Tampax/Bud Lite Gurlz Gurlz disco where we squeeze in and sweat and sway for a while. Then it's off to the Marlboro Lite GRRRL Club for more of the same. By now we need a break from the alcohol and smoke, so we head to the Minutemaid/Coke Girls Will Be Girls Gala, where everyone is abuzz about the Gerber/GAP Stonewall Stroller Invitational for the gayby boomer set. Then we gather our strength and make it just in time to the big finale, the Deneuve/Miller Lite Girlz Nite OUT!

The Kodak "Rainbow Moments" virtual reality booth lets you experience such nostalgic activities as demonstrations, gay bath houses and women-only space.

When we wake up the next morning, we're just too tired to attend the Polaroid/Revlon Stonewall Awards and Fashion Show brunch, but we do manage to make it to the Apple/IBM/Pizza Hut Product/Snack Pavilion where we go wild charging all kinds of gifts and souvenirs on our recently/acquired Pink Triangle edition VISA card (especially for domestic partners). The line is too long for the Kodak "Rainbow Moments" virtual reality booth—where you can experience such nostalgic activities as demonstrations, gay bathhouses and women-only space—so we head back to the hotel.

"Around that time, the street queens were being drummed out of the gay movement; 'stereotypes' and 'bad role models' we were called. At the 1974 rally they tried to stop me from speaking. My gay brothers wrestled me down three times from the platform, so I looked a little roughed up in my dress, standing at the mike. I was booed. But no one was going to stop me from talking. I'm a loudmouth queen and if you fuck with me you don't get away with silence. But that whole incident took me way way down and I left the movement." (*ibid.* p. 4) [eds. note: lesbian-feminists were a significant opposition to transvestites. They analyzed "queens" as representing a degrading imitation of women, a male embrace of female stereotypes and a view of women as a 'piece of meat.]

In 1989, the Latino Gay and Lesbian Coalition in New York City declared their participation in the Puerto Rican Parade as "our" Stonewall, claiming that through participating in the Puerto Rican Pride Parade, they were celebrating Stonewall. Again, there is no claiming of Stonewall itself as a point of departure for minority gay liberation, including Latinos and Puerto Ricans, perhaps because the identity discourses of nationality and ethnicity are the most privileged sites of identity construction in the US. At the same time, it is difficult to assert symbolic primacy in a culture that denies your worth and/or existence.

Frances Negron is a writer and filmmaker in Philadelphia

On the way, we stop at the LAMBDA/Nautilus Reenactment Exhibit, in which holographic images of buff blond dancers and members of New York's Gay and Lesbian Police Officers Association do a stylized rendition of the famous Stonewall riots. I lean over to my lover and say, "I could be wrong but I thought the rioters were Black and Puerto Rican drag queens, along with a few bull dykes."

"Oh, they were," she replies, "but the sponsors felt these dancers and police officers give a more 'positive' image to gay people."

We're sort of disappointed we'll miss the Awareness Festival, since it's scheduled to start after our plane leaves, but we're SO satisfied we "did" Stonewall/Games. As we're thumbing through our in-flight magazine, *Lambdasphere*, on the way home, we see an ad that really gets our attention. It's a full-page deal with a picture of the empire state building with a pink triangle superimposed on it and a caption that reads, "If you thought Stonewall/Games 1999 was the best party of this century, make your reservations now for Sony/Games 2000!"

A version of this article originally appeared in the newsletter of Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention.

Jennie McKnight is a former GCN collective member who currently lives in San Francisco. She's too grossed out to attend Stonewall 25.

FOR CUBA'S GAYS AND LESBIANS, CHANGE IS IN THE WIND

by Jessica Mates

(For nine days in late January/early February, a group of eight lesbian and gay activists from the U.S. traveled to Cuba on a trip organized by the Cuba Information Project. While scores of out lesbians and gay men have visited Cuba, this was the first officially welcomed gay delegation. The group's leader has been there many times, while for the other seven this was our first trip to the island.)

The first challenge in visiting Cuba was to establish firm footing — a stance from which you could form opinions without being swayed by external forces or pre-conceived notions. It would have been easy to be entranced by a beautiful tropical island on which political principal had won out over monetary power. It was also easy to condemn a revolution that, even as it brought economic parity, free national health care and education to its people, fostered some of the most basic and harshest expressions of discrimination.

The challenge of forming educated and thoughtful opinions was further complicated by the inability to use comparison as a means of judgement. How can you measure attitudes or gauge operational effectiveness when ruling interests and priorities differ so greatly from the government you know? If leftists are running the government, how do you view lobbyists or advocates? If a country's national pride is based on comprehensive health care rather than individual economic prosperity or military might, how do you think about patriotism?

Several historical realities also weighed on our minds as we explored the island. We had heard much about Cuba's repression of gays: work camps in the late 1960's, where those considered to be deviants (i.e., homosexuals) were sent for rehabilitation. And we knew of the United States' powerful and far-reaching economic blockade that has consistently denied Cuba of economic necessities and sought to undermine the revolution.

It was amidst these challenges and conflicting realities that we discussed, debated, and re-thought issues of identity. Everywhere we went, we were introduced as lesbians and gay men. Our questions to our hosts combined inquires specific to the circumstance, and also included pointed questions regarding the situation of lesbians and gay men. Yet unless we pushed, discussions usually veered away from issues of sexuality and towards health care, service provision, or the economy.

Our meetings varied enormously. A young family doctor (part of a national neighborhood-based health care system) explained how his practice worked. Senior citizens sang to us and recalled stories from their pre-revolutionary lives. Youth program directors described their organization. PWAs and doctors explained changes in Cuba's HIV/AIDS program.* But some constants existed throughout the visit. No one raised the issue of sexuality unless prompted. No one made any hostile remarks (with the exception of a small group of gay men who seemed to have an odd view of how lesbians look). Everyone said they knew gay people, but that sexual orientation was not a relevant factor. Everyone said that discrimination against lesbians and gay men in Cuba had been rampant but, while many individuals still carry anti-gay ideas, it is no longer an official government policy.

The fact that not only laws, but attitudes towards lesbians and gays in Cuba have changed is clear. But discussions about identity — whether it is either necessary or preferable for lesbians and gay men, or any other group, to separate themselves out from the rest of society — were more complicated. They forced an examination of what motivates Cubans, but also of our own movement.

To the many Cubans with whom we spoke, national identity is key. Cubans see themselves very much as a people - a group with a powerful common history, jointly held priorities, and many shared goals. The Cubans indicated that having been part of a successful socialist movement, their struggle is to maintain the equalities fought for and won, and therefore those who would seek a distinct identity often seem irrelevant at best and threatening at worst. This is true of any group - whether based on sexuality, race or political persuasion. Understanding the centuries-long struggle for national independence, and the 35 years of hostility from the superpower just ninety miles away (with a total economic blockade that includes food and medicines), helps explain the development of a single, national identity in Cuba.

The reasons for promoting lesbian and gay identities are complex. But at least some of the motivation for advancing distinct identities in the United States is the need to address the failures of our own political and economic system. When we decided that a mosaic was a preferable metaphor to a melting pot in New York City, were we celebrating the joys of diversity or acknowledging that here, when lumped together, too many people are treated unfairly? When we form organizations and practice identity politics, are we honoring a variety of proud heritages or understanding that too many needs will go unmet if we fail to distinguish ourselves from others? When we revel in gay pride, do we seek permanent, separate gay structures, or do we build towards a time when pride is inherent and not found only at once-a-year parades?

The director of the country's first drop-in center for teenagers asked us for materials related to working with gay youth

Yet without a distinct identity, there is often no visibility. And lack of visibility breeds the misunderstanding and ignorance that maintains discrimination. The Cubans we met readily admitted that lesbians and gay men are more likely to be hassled by police, for example, than heterosexuals. And this harassment is no longer due to any existing laws, but to often deep-seated homophobic attitudes. Based on our own experience in this country, we know that changing laws to punish harassing behavior can be an important part of the more complex process of reshaping attitudes and behavior, although it is never an end in itself. Since real changes in attitude cannot be legislated, we also advocated, during many of our meetings, for the kind of lesbian and gay visibility in Cuba that would ultimately help to change people's attitudes.

Lesbian and gay visibility was clearly lacking. Social gathering spots where lesbians and gay men meet are few and far between. We had trouble meeting lesbians and gay men, and several gay people who had agreed to meet with us cancelled at the last moment. Those who we had reason to believe were lesbian or gay did not always want to discuss it. And yet evidence of change abounded. The National Center for Sex Education has developed a series of workshops focusing on homophobia. The director of the country's first drop-in center for teenagers asked us for materials related to working with gay youth. Discussions of gay oppression have taken place within the Union of Young Communists.

Perhaps most striking was the production and showing of the movie "Fresas y Chocolate," the story of a friendship between a gay man and a straight man. Made by the Cuban Film Institute, the film won almost every major award at the recent Havana Film Festival and has been playing to long lines throughout the country. Articles in the newspapers and discussions on TV talk shows have given the film even greater prominence. A woman who works for the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party helped put this in perspective when she reminded us that the decision to put resources into this film came at time when Cuba is struggling through its worst economic crisis since 1959.

Government officials acknowledge the need for change even as they insist it is already taking place. When asked why attitudes towards lesbians and gay men are changing, one official replied that the revolution did not end in 1959, it is a process that is ongoing. Ending discrimination is a part of the continual revolutionary struggle. We suggested that a public statement by the Cuban leadership acknowledging the severe repression of past years (which everyone admitted did happen) could go a long way toward confronting homophobia and opening up more space for lesbians and gay men to come out.

Perhaps the greatest testament to the willingness to change, and the complexity of the present situation for lesbians and gay men, came from a leader of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC). On the one hand, while acknowledging the existence of lesbians in the FMC, she was clearly uncomfortable even discussing the need for lesbian visibility and activism let alone promoting it. On the other hand, her final comment on the subject was, "they should do that in the schools, with the youth." Maybe if the United States similarly recognized the need for change and the ways to create it, we too could look forward to a more enlightened next generation.

* Until recently, anyone who tested HIV positive had to live in one of the nation's sanatoriums. Now, the goal is to have as many people as possible return to their homes and jobs after a thorough medical evaluation is done, a course of treatment has been set and counseling has been completed. There are other changes as well, and in fact Cuba's response to HIV/AIDS, from its initial reaction to its current practices, warrents a whole article.

JESSICA MATES is a long time activist and organizer in the lesbian and gay community in New York City. She works in the development and implementation of youth services and programs.

During the last two years, the Project has had to curtail most of our activities. We still receive some 50 letters a week from people in prison, but have only been able to send these folks an updated list of resources and referrals. We have, however, recruited new members, established a close cooperative relationship with the Prison Book Program*, and raised needed seed money to reestablish an effective project. Now we want to update our informational packets on AIDS, lesbian and gay history, and resources for getting out of prison. We also plan to provide similar packets for Spanish-speaking prisoners.

We are beginning to develop a public education campaign focused on getting condoms and safe sex information distributed in Massachusetts prisons. Only two states currently allow condoms in their prison systems (Mississippi and Vermont). The city jails that allow condoms are New York, San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. Only San Francisco allows dental dams. Safe sex information in prison is often limited to reminding prisoners that having sex and doing drugs are illegal in prison. Meanwhile, women in prison (who make up about 6% of the overall prison population) are twice as likely as men to be HIV positive. In 1990, approximately 35% of women tested in Massachusetts prisons were HIV-positive.

In addition, we will re-establish pen pal listings for lesbian and gay prisoners, and will work with the Prison Book Program to send donated lesbian and gay literature to people who request reading materials.

Unfortunately, there are very few other groups around the country doing this kind of work. Some ACT UP chapters address prison concerns, particularly ACT UP/San Francisco which has worked for the compassionate release of prisoners with AIDS. (For info: P.O. Box 1488, San Francisco, CA 94119) There is also a group called the League for Lesbian and Gay Prisoners (1202 E. Pike St., Suite 1044, Seattle, WA 98122-3934), which helped allow prisoners to participate in the 1993 March on Washington via proxy. Lesbian political prisoners have some support from the Out of Control—Lesbian Committee to Support Women Political Prisoners (Box 30, 3543 18th St., San Francisco, CA 94110) and political prisoners are also the focus for QUISP (Queer Women and Men United in Support of Political Prisoners, 380 Bleecker St., Ste. 134, New York, NY 10014).

So, the long and short of it is WE NEED YOU, to help revitalize a movement in support of all people in prison, that tries to break down the walls between those inside and those who, at the moment, get to be out. We meet approximately once a month at GCN, 25 West St., downtown Boston. You can also get involved with one of our projects and never come to meetings, or you can work with the Prison Book Project which meets on Thursday nights. To find out more, call us, (617) 426-4469. Someone from the Prisoner Project will be in touch. THANKS!

*The Prison Book Program sends free books to prisoners on political, legal, and educational topics. The program receives about 50 letters a week from prisoners throughout the United States. To get involved, or to donate books, call Fran at 617-884-5132.

Prisoner Resources

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation has prepared a press kit featuring information on "prison population growth, prison costs, intermediate sanctions, changes in public opinion, [and] quotations on criminal justice issues." The package is intended to inform the media, policy makers and others, and presents facts on sentencing and corrections policy in the U.S. It also suggests some means of promoting the development of a safer, fairer, and more affordable

criminal justice system. The press kit is available from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 250 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10177-0026. Telephone: (212) 551-9100; Fax: (212) 986-4558.

PWAC-NY is a monthly forum for the AIDS/HIV community. It encourages submissions of writing, photography and artwork. Annual subscriptions are \$35 in the U.S., \$40 in Canada and \$50 abroad. Write PWA-NY at 50 West 17th Street, 8th Floor, New York, NY 10011.

Stop Prisoner Rape (SPR) defines its purpose as providing "education, information and advocacy at all levels with regard to this ongoing nightmare of sexual assault and enslavement; to provide encouragement, advice, counseling and legal support to survivors; to train the staff which must deal with them; and to combat this systematic horror in every way possible." To obtain more information, write SPR, P.O. Box 2713, Manhattanville Station, New York, NY 10027-8817. Telephone: (212) 666-0344.

The Prison Mirror is a monthly publication put out by the men at the Minnesota Correctional Facility — Stillwater. It features articles and letters from inmates and guest writers, as well as resource information and poetry. All inmates and outside readers are encouraged to write. Subscriptions for inmates are only \$5.00. Write P.O. Box 55, Stillwater, MN 55082-0055 for more information.

SisterNet is a new, bimonthly publication for les/bi-an womyn, developed to help womyn connect on an individual level. It will focus on making womyn aware of national and international resources and services. Contact SisterNet at 977 Seminole Trail, #274, Charlottesville, VA 22901.

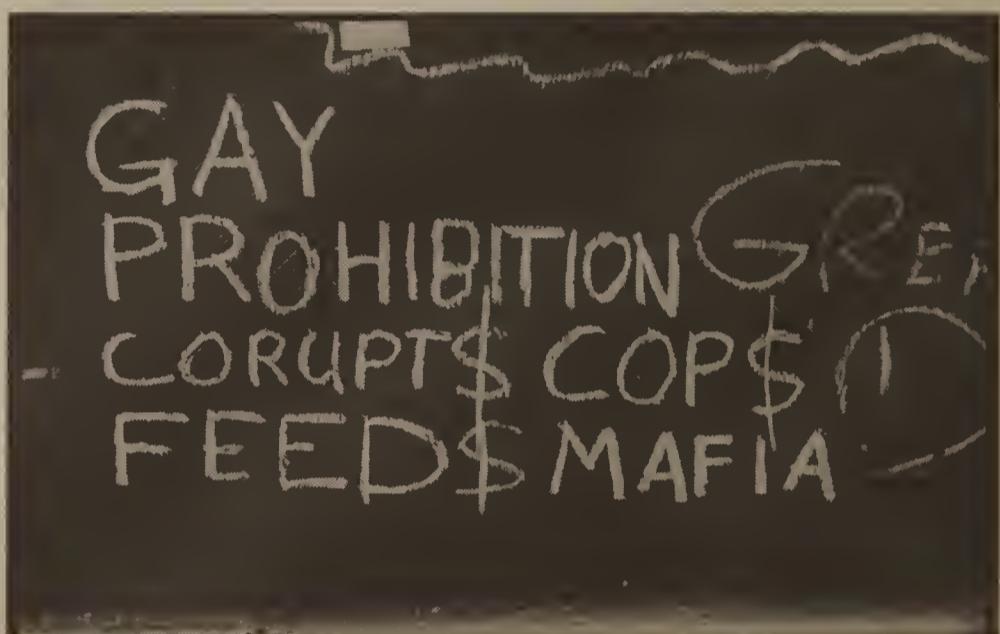
Queer Zine Explosion is a mammoth listing of fanzines of interest to queers of just about every stripe. Some are free to prisoners. The current issue is available for two 29 cent stamps from Larry-Bob, Box 591275, San Francisco, CA 94159-1275.

The 48 page booklet, "AIDS and Prisoners: The Facts for Inmates and Officers" (1993), is available from the National Prisoner Project of the ACLU, 1875 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 410, Washington, D.C. 20009. Sample copies are free; bulk orders are also available, prices on request. Telephone: (202) 234-4830.

The NAMBLA Bulletin is available free to persons imprisoned for having sex with minors. Contact Rock Thatcher, Suite 120, Box 263, 4730 East Indian School Road, Phoenix, AZ 85018.

another reign of terror. We've got to get organized. This is our chance."

CORRUPTION IN THE BARS: It is generally believed that the gay bars in NYC are controlled by the Mafia, in cooperation with the police. Reputable leaders of the gay community stated as much in private during the days following the riots, and Craig Rodwell of the Homophile Youth Movement went so far as to make such charges in leaflets distributed on Greenwich Ave. however, no solid evidence has yet been presented in court. It is also generally



believed that in order to obtain a liquor license from the State Liquor Authority, a bribe ranging from \$10,000 to \$30,000 must be paid. Dick Leitsch of Mattachine Society of NY states that when some friends of his attempted to get a license to run a gay bar, the SLA turned them down on technicalities, even though a recent decision of the courts has held that gay bars and intra-sexual dancing in public places are legal. Since the SLA refuses to issue licenses to gay bars, these bars are generally run without licensing, under unsanitary conditions, serving watered drinks at outrageous prices—and are therefore a perfectly legitimate target of police raids. During ordinary times, the police have allowed these bars to operate, overlooking violations in return for a percentage of the take. During election years, these bars become the target for raids and roundups of homosexuals.

The raids in the Sixth Precinct are believed to have been triggered off by the presence of a new captain, who wishes to make his reputation as a "law-and-order" man during a conservative year by "cleaning up the Village."

From the collection of The Lesbian Herstory Archives, Lesbian Herstory Education Foundation, Inc. P.O. Box 1258, New York, NY 10116.

and it's anti-gay, it's anti-us. It doesn't matter what we put on paper—it's not like there's a rationale or logic behind what they spew at us. So I have been very frustrated by the inability to dislodge this bill. It could barely be dislodged to present it to the legal groups, and they're practically insiders, much less the broader community. From a Washington perspective, from what I've gathered, people genuinely think everything gets handled at the lobbying level; some of them don't see the need to get the grassroots mobilized.

GCN: Is there any idea that this is going to break the defensive positions we've been in?

PE: I think there's that hope, but I'm not sure there has been any organizing around that idea. We're locked in a battle in our own community: when national groups go into local areas, people there get upset, saying why are you treading in our territories? Partly, that's because many of our national groups have gone into states only to fundraise and have not given a lot back to the community. Of course, in some states, national and state groups have worked very closely together. We have to link up better somehow. For example, if people in New York are furious at this being a narrower bill than what they're trying to push statewide, they're not going to come out in support. And, we need every one of those Congresspeople from New York, as much as we need everyone else in the country. The ones from New York City may be with us, but the members of Congress from Buffalo, Syracuse, and other places are not.

GCN: What will this as a civil rights bill cover, what, e.g., becomes a union prerogative, what becomes an employer-based policy?

PE: Employers by and large have adopted policies banning discrimination based on a whole host of things that will never find their way into federal law, like veteran status, or whatever. So, employers have always had a prerogative to create a workplace environment where they are (at least on paper) espousing diversity. The problem is there's no legal enforcement of those policies, or very little that's possible. Nothing in this law is going to prevent anyone in the private sector, or the public sector for that matter, from going beyond it. Federal law is the base minimum, it says you can't drop below this point. And, it's a pretty low point. Our community is very well organized on the local level, we wouldn't see domestic partner policies passing right and left, or getting adopted in companies around the country, we wouldn't see what I think is a vital and connected labor movement if people weren't organizing around what impacts them the most; and Washington seems very far away to many people. Our job is to make the connection—to say, a lot of your local organizing would be enhanced if this law were there. But that's not going to happen the minute the bill is introduced. We haven't done the years of organizing that's necessary to reach the point of having significant support for a federal law.

GCN: Do you think this bill will pass in this session of Congress?

PE: The thing about an employment-only bill is that people think it can pass with just the lobbying effort in place. The polling data is there, that all Americans basically agree that it's wrong to deny somebody a job just because they're gay. The Right is going to be vocal no matter what anybody does, but still there's a strong sense that it can pass.

As a movement, I think we face both a political war and a cultural war, and those are two different but connected things. The political war is whether you can win at the ballot box, and we've made some gains there, despite the initiatives we've lost. The Right is waging a cultural war against us: gay people are

going to substantially change our culture, change our way of life, they're going to disassemble families. Well, of course that is our goal—not to disassemble families, but to broaden the conception of who's a family, and support all kinds of families. This bill is a political issue—Congresspeople don't have to even believe it's right, they just have to know that there's a constituency out there, a substantial group of people who when asked, "do you believe it's right to deny someone a job because they're gay?" say, "no." Whereas a broader civil rights law gets into questions like, "does this mean if I'm a Catholic landlord I have to rent to a lesbian couple?"

GCN: Yes!

PE: Well, that is the purpose of a law. But you have a case pending in Massachusetts before the Supreme Judicial Court where it's a matter of renting to a straight unmarried couple, and courts are finding the arguments very seductive that of course if you're a Catholic landlord, you can discriminate, because otherwise your right to exercise your religion would be violated, which is dissembling the concept of marital status discrimination.

GCN: Time line?

PE: We're hoping to get the bill introduced sometime in June. We're hoping to have hearings in June as well, though as it gets late in the legislative year, that may not be possible. The legislative session ends in July, unless they're kept over on health care reform.

difference is that we have higher disposable income—we're 13.7 times more likely to be frequent flyers, 4.7 times more likely to take overseas vacations—we consume more. Or as Queer Nation puts it, we're the profit margins.

I think the way we fought the gays in the military campaign fuelled the polarization between race and sexuality. We said over and over again—we represent the *last chapter* in the civil rights struggle, the *last* governmentally sanctioned discrimination. We represent the civil rights movement of the 90s, implying that issues of racial injustice have been (re-)solved and we were ready to move on. It is that kind of assumption that was operating in New York City around issues of curricula, and one that we must challenge. Many gay people, and I include myself from afar, thought that multicultural curricula had been achieved in New York. I had followed the debates in the *New York Times*, I thought that Black and Latin parents had succeeded in gaining curricula, in which their histories were represented, in which their children could find themselves recognized. Indeed, the only thing that had to happen was for queers to be added on. Now that was nowhere near true, in fact the struggle for multicultural curricula has met resistances and roadblocks all along the way. White queers moved in there with a kind of arrogance and ignorance, a privilege, assuming that we could lead the struggle for all of us without spending any time trying to learn what others had experienced, what they had encountered, without seeing others as resources from whom we could learn something. We cannot continue to move as a white movement.

Disentangling Homophobia

As we work to understand what fosters homophobia, I think there is a serious danger in overemphasizing the role of the Right. That is in representing homophobia as "rightwing;" and representing our movement as crucially about "fighting the Right." Homophobia isn't a thing, it's not an essence, that exists for all time. It is a production, a constantly shifting and renewed production. Usually, it mobi-

lizes the fear of sex, the violent disavowal of terrifying desire; sometimes, in some communities, the fear of racist associations of Blackness, immorality and disease; often, the fear of children and sex, most crucially the fear that my kid might think it is OK to be gay. That is the one that we have yet to put on the table, address, and not let slide under. That is the unspoken fear that galvanizes so many liberals behind a homophobic agenda. We have to disentangle these strands, decode these appeals. But unfortunately that has not been the strategy of our movement as we have fought rightwing initiatives. Just look at the commercials used in Cincinnati to fight the anti-gay momentum. What we tried to do was to appeal to people to understand that the Rightwing was a dangerous movement. The commercials had images of Nazi book-burnings, hooded Ku Klux Klan members—saying that if you support this initiative, this is what will happen in Cincinnati. People didn't buy it. And, all we were asking people to do was to disidentify from the Right, not that they should understand anything about us. That is the danger in seeing homophobia as this monolithic rightwing production.

Making Youth a Priority

Lastly, is our failure to move youth to the center of our agenda. I have a utopian vision that the gay and lesbian movements come to lead a movement to save our children. That we should put that issue right in the center: not sideline it, not push it under the table, not rush to say that we don't have anything to do with NAMBLA. It is there. It's there in all that subtle language. They used to say I don't want anyone to condone homosexuality, now they say I don't want anyone to promote or encourage it. Now you know what that language is coding. It's coding that what gay people do is—promote, encourage, recruit—it is seldom absent, subtly coded into all the political language and we're not going to get rid of it by running away from it. We need to lead a movement that is about saving all our children. "Whose Kids?, Our Kids!" was the slogan in NYC. I understand that confronts a lot in us as once queer children, our own painful memories of our childhood which can block us. One of the most radical things we could do in this country is try to articulate a vision in which we see all our children as all our national resources. Try to break through this horrible individual solutions response. One image someone suggested was to see our schools as a reservoir, you can't pollute one part of it without affecting all of it. We have to begin to figure out ways for people to see what happens to our children and in our schools as something of concern to all of us, not just to individual parents.

Many people have called for the abandonment of identity politics. I think that's a terrible mistake. I don't believe it's desirable in this moment to surrender the definition of our identity to the homophobes in the Congress and the courts, to allow their ignorant ravings and rantings about not encouraging "the homosexual lifestyle" to go uncontested. We inherit identity politics, identity politics inherits us, it's the politics that we have to take up. But, that does not mean that we have to project a unified gay identity. Rather, it seems to me, that the politics of our community right now must be a contest over the meaning of that identity, a multiplying of the possible meanings of that identity; and that has got to be seen as a strength of our movement, not as a weakness. That great contest, *who am I and who are we?* is the one that propels our movement, and when the argument stops so does our history and so does our movement.

Margaret Cerullo is an activist and teaches Sociology and Women's Studies at Hampshire College. She is an editor of *Radical America*.

Mike: No, no, that would not be good. I'd get shot in the head. I was severely bashed—really bad—in South Boston a couple of years ago. Ever since then I have not considered it a choice to be out in that neighborhood or in school. Otherwise I'm going to end up lying dead in the street.

Shelley: What are some of your other experiences with gaybashing?

Mike: I've been to gay clubs and there's been a crowd of people outside who are not gay, and I've been peeking out the door waiting for them to go. I've thought, "Oh my god, I'm this defenseless queen with my little pink triangle on and my leather cap, what's going to happen to me if I walk into this big group of straight men?" Like during rush hour, there's all these people, and you are looking around and feeling that 90% of them are straight. It's just so intimidating; it makes you feel so small and pathetic.

Shelley: What would you want an audience to know about if you were making a video?

Ron: I would have shown a gay bashing scene. I would show reality.

Jamie: In "Homoteens" I didn't see any of these kids get thrown out of the house. I didn't see any kids living on the street.

Mike: You see them moving out on their own, like they breezed out. But they didn't show the conflict, they didn't show the confrontation. It was like "Ta-da, my mother and I had a fight and I just decided to move out, and I just automatically have an apartment all set up for me." Uh-uh, some of us have to suffer and stay with our families!

Jamie: What about the kids that go to a club every night, and find someone to go home with so they have a place to live?

There Needs to be Places for Us

Shelley: The movie showed a few scenes in clubs. How common do you think it is for teens to go to bars and clubs?

Jamie: Very!

Frank: You can be comfortable in a bar, because usually everyone's there to really be themselves, and you can act as feminine or butch as you want.

Ron: You can't even do that in clubs. The gay community is still so —

Mike:—internally homophobic.

Ron: Yeah, it pisses me off. If you're a drag queen, it's like, "Oh, yeah, you're so beautiful, but I don't want anything to do with you!" When you're gay you still have to play this role of butch man and feminine woman or you don't get what you want.

I moved up here from Houston, and Houston is racist, especially in the gay community. When I moved up here I thought it was all going to change, because Boston is such a gay city. But there's so much racism here within the gay community, and there's so much internalized homophobia. I'm like, "Why? You're already a minority, you should know how it feels to be discriminated against—why are you going to discriminate against someone else?" Myself, being Black and gay, also a drag queen, I just keep getting knocked down.

Mike: It causes a vicious circle too, because once the white gay people discriminate against the Black gay people, the Black gay people end up hating them, and then the white and Black gay people are constantly in conflict. But that's not enough, so then they involve the Spanish, and it's just like everybody spins around and ends up hating each other.

The thing is, a lot of us have a distorted view of the gay community, because to us it's the clubs. There's nothing else around Boston [for GLBT youth]. There's groups here and there, but they just never get off the ground because people lose interest. Then there are the little cafes that are like half gay. You're trying to meet somebody in a healthy environment or something (laughter) and it's like you don't know if he's gay or not.

Ron: I was at [a restaurant with a large gay clientele] with a boyfriend and we were kissing, and a waiter came up and told us to stop. He said "That's not appropriate here." And he was gay. I never went back there because of that.

Maura: So that's another difficulty, finding a social scene.

Mike: Yeah, exactly. Once you do meet that person—the impossible task—where do you go to have a little romantic, intimate dinner and whisper sweet nothings in his ear? At [another restaurant with a large gay clientele], the people act like their noses are attached to the ceiling with fishhooks, they are so goddamn snotty, and it's like a billion dollars for a hamburger and a radish.

can never win.

Shelley: What are other things you see that are either problems in the gay community, or good things about it?

Ron: [A gay youth group] was great when I first came to Boston. It helped me come out and be who I am. But it also hindered me because it only showed me one piece of the gay community, because most of those kids were from suburbia, and they were white, and there were a lot of times that I was the only Black person and there were no other minorities there. I felt very segregated. I think there needs to be places for gay youth and gay minority youth to go, to get together and meet each other and see that there are others out there like them.

Mike: Drugs and sex are one of the bigger problems in the gay community. I can't speak for the lesbian side of the gay community, because I don't go to lesbian clubs because I'm not a lesbian!

Jamie: It's in the women's bars too.

Mike: A lot of people that are gay think, "All right, my family hates me, my peers hate me, I'm going to smoke weed and relax and get away from it for a little while."

Ron: It's not their fault, it's not their fault!

Mike: No, it's society and the fact that it's so readily available. Even in the straight community, what are bars and clubs known for? Sex and drugs. So in the gay community it's that much more intensified.

Maura: What might be some alternatives to the bars for youth?

Ron: Gay youth groups, but more mixed and doing more than just sitting around and talking.

Mike: The problem is, these groups are just too organized for me! I'd rather go to a social setting like a cafe than to a group where on one night from 7pm–8pm you can be yourself.

Frank: There need to be places for us. They have gay health clubs that are strictly for 21 and over, and what, you're not fit until you're 21? I've noticed that there are sports events for older gay men and lesbians. Gay youth play everything from ping pong to soccer to baseball, but no one cares about young people doing sports.

Maura: What about activist groups like Act Up, are those groups you feel shut out of?

Frank: You have to go to them. They never come.

Mike: I've gone to one meeting [of a direct action group] and if you don't totally get pissed and hate the world and hate your parents because they're Catholic—

Frank:—and stamp pink triangles on peoples' foreheads—

Mike:—and throw pig's blood on people and say "This is AIDS blood," and just flip out, they're like, "You're a weak queen, go away," and "We knew you were too young all along."

Frank: Every organization should have a youth group on the side. The adults and youth can meet separately. Because from day to day we can't really talk about the same things. If the adults and youth always met together the young people would be sitting there thinking, "This is so boring." But once a week or something we could all get together, and talk about what the adults talked about and what we talked about.

Don't Use Us

Mike: There's another problem in the gay community: a lot of older people try to use you.

Adults have to recognize us as part of their community because we are. They sort of use us. During Gay Pride they put us up and say, "Yes, this is our gay youth." The day after that, it's like the door closes.

Shelley: Do you think the snobbishness is about age, do you feel it's the older community acting that way? Or is it about class, people with more money?

Mike: I think gay people have been conditioned in a negative way so badly that it's almost like a defense mechanism. "You can't hurt me because I am so high up on myself. You can't get to me because I'm so fierce and I'm so fabulous."

Frank: But there's also so much right with the community.

Mike: Yeah, there are a lot of good things. There's community, like during Gay Pride, one day out of the year when people seem unified, even if they're not. But even still, during Pride, you see people looking down on other people:

"Look at that messy drag queen; look at that leatherman, he don't even have no tan and he's wearing that harness; look at those plain jane gay people on the sides, why aren't they marching?" You

Jamie: I was out with someone last week, and I took him up to a lesbian bar. He was like, "Where are the gay males?" and I was like, "It's a lesbian bar," and he was like, "No old [guys] are going to try to pick me up?"

Mike: Adults have to recognize us as part of their community because we are. They sort of use us. During Gay Pride they put us up and say, "Yes, this is our gay youth." The day after that, it's like the door closes.

Jamie: I think adults have to learn to take responsibility for their actions, because that's what the kids see. For example, they have a strip contest once a week at [a club], and the winner gets 75 bucks. What's that saying to 18-year old kids in the club, that it's OK to strip for 75 dollars? Who else are they going to strip for after that?

Mike: Well, the stripping for 75 bucks might not put them in incredible danger, but it puts them in the mode where they think, "Gee, I can strip for 75 bucks, I wonder if I go the next step up and have sex with somebody, how much money will I make then?" It's so hard because if you look into every single one of us there's so much loneliness and nobody knows how to fill it. There's no little slot for us to fit into society. We have to have this whole subculture where the rules are made up as we go along.

Jamie: And it all goes back to responsibility in the adult community. And in the youth community, too. Because you can't put the blame on the adults if there's a youth out there drinking. But if a kid is at a club you don't pick him up, or you don't buy him a drink.

Mike: They glamorize it, too, right in front of your face: "Oh, I'm sooo stoned, and I'm sooo horny, and I just had sex with the most fabulous guy...oh, my god, girlfriend!" And you don't see them when they are at home throwing up.

Ron: I don't think you can blame it all on the adults—I don't think you can blame it on anyone. Because the teenagers are lonely, and the adults just want to have a good time. Everyones lonely. But teenagers can be hurt really bad if they don't know what's going on.

Mike: Especially when you're just coming out. Because your life was so miserable when you were in the closet, you have these high expectations, like "Now I'm going to meet a guy, and now I'm going to live." You go to a club and the first guy you see is gorgeous and he pays attention to you and he buys you a drink. You'll do anything he wants. And of course he's going to tell you, "Oh yes, you're beautiful," 'cause he wants your sex. Once he gets in your pants, he's gone. I'm pissed at all the men who have screwed me over, so I've in turn screwed over as many as I possibly could.

Frank: And the ones that you screw over are the ones that are good. You had the bad ones, and then you push away the good ones.

Shelley: Does this happen between women, too?

Jamie: Yeah, I see it all the time. If I meet someone older and I know what she's looking for, where do I draw the line? But that's just me. Actually there's tons of young lesbians out there that are like, "Wow, she's really interested in me."

Mike: There are some good things about the gay community. We've been sitting here for the last hour bashing the gay community, and that's not fair.

Frank: Look at James [Collins, TEGLY advisor]. James just opened the first gay and lesbian tobacco education program!

Jamie: This whole conversation is so down! I want to

mention one of the good sides of the gay and lesbian community. When I first came out, I could relate to everyone, because everyone had gone through the same thing I was going through, whether it had been at 15 or at 35, whenever. It's like a family where everyone really cares for each other. And that's what I love, the closeness and the diversity in the gay community.

Ron: You mean that feeling of identifying with people when you see somebody on the street?

Jamie: Yeah, I could walk down the street and see Frank and go up and hug him—even if I haven't seen him for three years—and start talking about god knows what. You don't see straight people walking down the street hugging.

TEGLY is a collaborative project of Boston Children's Services and Proud, Inc. Funded by the Mass. Tobacco Control Program, it is the only tobacco education effort that focuses on GLBT youth. TEGLY sponsors regular smoke-free events and will soon be providing youth-led smoking cessation groups for youth. For more information, call James at 617-437-7683.

"Homoteens" can be ordered through Frameline at 415-703-8650.

AIDS Goes Union continued from Page 10

Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center indicate that unions can bring substantial benefits to an AIDS organization.

Northwest AIDS Foundation

In 1989, the infrastructure of the Northwest AIDS Foundation was a mess. Job descriptions and supervisory relationships were at best loosely defined. The agency had no performance evaluation procedures. Staff expressed complaints about low salaries, poor benefits, a fire-at-will clause and the feeling of not being empowered. Employees also expressed distrust for the board of directors and management. Nancy Campbell, Executive Director, who joined the agency while the union drive was under way, echoed this sentiment: "There was so little management at the time, that it was unclear to me what constituted management." Exasperated with these conditions, staff organized and successfully voted in the union.

Contract negotiations followed, and difficulties with the union arose. Rather than proving catastrophic, however, they were eventually resolved, albeit through time-consuming negotiations between management and union members.

During contract negotiations, the union tried to limit the role of volunteers. A battle took place between Northwest — management and staff — and the union, for whom volunteers were something to fight. Campbell pointed out that the union's ideas around seniority clashed with Northwest's: "A clerical person with seniority gets to bump a case manager? The language they proposed said that." Eventually, however, these issues were resolved to the satisfaction of both management and staff. In all, Nancy Campbell estimates that she spent 20% of her time over 18 months on union issues until the negotiations were complete. The second round of contract negotiations was much easier, since many of the problems had been worked out during the first round.

Fran Olla, Housing Advocate, pointed to several benefits of the union. It successfully abolished the "fire-at-will" clause. Salaries have increased, and benefits have improved. Job descriptions and supervisory relationships are much more clearly defined. Staff feel more comfortable voicing their concerns.

"The union provided a safety net for people," Olla explained.

In the four years since bringing the union aboard, union members have not struck, contrary to the fears of GMHC management, and staff morale is high. Additionally, very few grievances have been filed with the union, indicating good working conditions and good communication between managers and staff. Ultimately, high morale and better working

Ultimately, high morale and better working conditions can only improve an agency's service delivery.

conditions can only improve an agency's service delivery.

Campbell admitted that a union drive at Northwest was no surprise. "Unions come in when management isn't doing their job," she said. However, Campbell does not agree that the union was responsible for these structural improvements. Rather, she claims that good management practices created these changes.

At first glance, this may appear true, especially since support for the union now is low. Northwest operates an "open shop," meaning that union members are not required to pay dues. At the present time, only 4 staff members do so. It may appear that the union has outlived its usefulness. Indeed, some staff speculate that it may be voted out when its contract comes due in 1995.

According to supporters, however, it was only union pressure that forced management at the Northwest AIDS Foundation to take notice and respond to staff complaints. "If people knew that the reason why they have all these benefits is because of the union," Olla said, "they might have a different attitude about signing up."

The Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center

"If an agency is looking at the issue of unionization, then there are some internal problems," said Hugh Rice, Manager of the Jeffrey Goodman Special Care Clinic at The Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. Rice has worked at the Center for 20 years, and he recalls many of the same internal problems with the Center that AIDS organizations are now experiencing. It had no human resources department, and therefore operated with informal hiring, promotion and firing policies. A lack of uniform grievance procedures led staff to feel power-

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less against managerial decisions, and open to random retaliation or firing. Staff felt that a union was their only recourse. Against management's resistance, the union was successfully voted in.

The Center has not always had an easy time with the union, however. Currently, for example, demand for services at the Clinic is rising, necessitating that it remain open more hours each day. This would require some staff to work four 10-hour shifts instead of five 8-hour shifts. Although staff support this, the union contract specifies that any hours worked beyond 8 per day must be counted as overtime. Since this stipulation makes these changes expensive, the Center will be forced to seek other alternatives.

Importantly, the union at the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center has leveled out the playing field between staff and management, giving staff a greater sense of empowerment and security. As Rice explained, "the union looks over people's shoulders to make sure things stay fair." In addition, the union has effectively resolved many of the grievances of the original organizing committee. The Center has a human resources department; grievance policies are in place; and the union contract has set standard rules for hiring, firing and promotion. Consequently, staff morale at the Center is very high, and union activity is minimal.

Rice summed up the ASO union phenomenon: "As (AIDS service organizations) become more institutionalized, more and more agencies will look towards institutional solutions to their problems."

Like Northwest, the Center experienced a dip in support for the union, and held a vote 3-4 years ago to do away with it. But staff ultimately voted in favor of keeping it, recognizing the crucial role it has played in improving working conditions at the Center. Additionally, the third round of contract negotiations, held last year, were the smoothest and most amicable in the union's history. Besides the challenges the union has brought, ultimately, for the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center, it has proven worthwhile in the long term.

Hopefully, both unions and the staff at newly-organized agencies will learn from the challenges of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center and the Northwest AIDS Foundation, and make their union experiences productive, empowering and ultimately beneficial for their clients.

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first — and still virtually the only — company in the world to come up with such guidelines. Because of reported human rights violations, the company pulled out of Burma, and China, even while that nation still enjoys most favored trading status with the U.S. Levi's guidelines go on to say that it will do business only with partners who uphold environmental regulations. Factory conditions must be clean and safe, and corporal punishment will not be tolerated. And Levi's does all this, Samson says, while attempting to respect local culture.

From most accounts, I'm able to find, Levi's is genuinely trying to be "responsible." The Council on Economic Priorities, a New York-based group that encourages socially aware buying and investing, spends most of its February 1994 report talking about Levi's program in Bangladesh, where child labor is the custom and children are often the sole support of their families. Levi's is paying for Bangladeshi children to go to school — tuition,

books, uniforms — until their 14th birthday, when they are given the option of working at the Levi's factory. And in Costa Rica — where Levi's San Antonio plant apparently relocated — pregnant women are actually kept on the payroll and given benefits. Notes Samson:

"There are some people who operate through the credo that if you're successful, you can do good. But we believe that operating your business in a responsible way will lead to success."

Levi's, I surmise, is what might happen if Woody Guthrie were to reincarnate as a multinational. "But do you have any actual reports of working conditions in these countries?" I ask. "All I can tell you," answers Samson, "is that they're honoring the guidelines."

Ten minutes after we hang up, Samson calls me back. Says he is concerned that I don't think Levi's is a "great company"; wants to know if I'd like to speak with a member of Levi's gay and lesbian affinity group. "We also have groups for African American professionals, Latinos..."

"They have a gay and lesbian affinity group?" says Ruth Rosenbaum. "I'm happy for them. What does that have to do with the way they treat their workers?" Rosenbaum is Managing Director of the Research Service for Ethical and Socially Responsible Investing at the F.L. Putnam Corporation. She is also on the board of the Texas-based Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, and truly seems to care about the lives of workers. I have called her to ask what she thinks of Levi's. She's suspicious, and says she'll look into it. Meanwhile, I decide to ask Irene Reyna what she thinks of Levi's progressive policies:

"Oh, they're liars. They're only motivated by greed. That's why they moved. They were not losing any money when they shut us down."

Accounts of Levi's behavior concerning the shutdown swing from point to counterpoint, depending on whom you talk to. Fuerza Unita says that Levi's laid off 1500 workers; Levi's and the National Labor Committee say 1100. Levi's says that 279 of its laid-off workers were welcomed into one of its two remaining San Antonio plants; Fuerza Unita says these workers were only rehired after a long struggle, and are now harassed on the job. Levi's says over 800 of its laid-off workers are now re-employed; Fuerza Unita says the jobs they have are minimum wage or part-time. Levi's says they gave workers 90 days notice (30 days more than the law requires), extended health coverage for three months, paid for several counselling and educational programs, and contributed over \$1 million in job training grants. Fuerza Unita says many workers were given no layoff notice; the "extended" benefits started the day the shutdown was announced; the counselling and training programs were either already in place or lasted only a few weeks; and the \$1 million was dispersed throughout city agencies, little of it reaching Levi's workers.

With almost 500 members, Fuerza Unita has started a boycott network extending across the Southwest and into Mexico. It's conducted "hunger strikes" every Thanksgiving for the last four years; presented two tribunals judging Levi's with citizen panels; met three times with Levi's representatives; worked with various unions, chained themselves to the door of Levi's San Francisco office. They plan to keep all this up until Levi's pays them adequate compensation. "They're so protective of their lily-white reputation," says Irene Reyna. "It's up to us to expose them."

And yet, I wonder, what exactly can they expose? That Levi Strauss is not really progressive? That's hardly worth much compensation from the going legal and political systems. Getting back to the larger

picture, this layoff has seemed to many people to have been a relatively benign one. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), for example, helped organize with Fuerza Unita just after the layoff. Later, with the Department of Justice, LULAC conducted a study of Levi's policies in the shutdown, and found that Levi's "had done more than any other company would have done" in such circumstances. LULAC's membership then voted not to support the boycott. And last fall, two lawsuits that Fuerza Unita intended to bring against Levi's were dismissed by the courts as being without merit.

The day after I speak with Irene Reyna, I receive, Federal Express from Dave Samson, about two pounds of stylish brochures, telling of Levi's AIDS education programs, its anti-racist work, its support for the arts. Some of the brochures are printed on recycled denim.

So Levi's goes to Central America with employment guidelines and a clear conscience. But if Levi's couldn't afford to have them, there wouldn't be any guide-

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lines, would there? I remember an article in a trade magazine called *Global Production*. In it, Pete Jacobi, President of Global Sourcing for Levi's, allows that the costs of enforcing the guidelines are insignificant: "We haven't found ourselves unable to source from given contractors because of dramatic cost increases," he says.

More troubling: how do we as queer consumers know that these guidelines — guidelines that would be absolutely unacceptable to us as workers in the U.S. — are actually being implemented? Like any guidelines, these are not laws, and can't be "enforced." Only last year, writes Laurie Udesky in a recent issue of *The Nation*, the Maquilas Internacionales plant in Juarez, Mexico was found to be in compliance with Levi's sourcing guidelines. Yet several former workers at the plant told Udesky that the roof leaked, there was no ventilation, that at least ten children under the age of 14 were employed at the plant, and that the workers were punished by days of unpaid layoff for going to the toilet too often.

Even assuming that conditions at Maquilas Internacionales — now closed — were an aberration in Levi's progressive scheme of things, the international labor movement is too weak — and Levi Strauss is not forthcoming enough — to offer any public information on the day-to-day working condi-

tions at *any* plant from which Levi's "sources" outside the U.S. Why, in fact, hasn't Dave Samson sent me any stylish brochures on *that*? What I'm getting is the truth, shrunk to fit. At this point, I decide to call Ruth Rosenbaum and ask her what she's uncovered.

After some research, Rosenbaum has decided that Levi's is, in fact, "on the up and up." "All right," I say. "Maybe if I'd been born in Honduras and had kids to raise, I'd prefer working in a Levi's plant than, say, a Calvin Klein plant. On the other hand, I might also prefer having my culture and my country back from hundreds of years of exploitation." Tensely, Rosenbaum answers. "This is not pseudo-liberal bullshit,"

"This is real stuff that affects real people in real ways. If my child was starving, and I had no other way to feed my child than to do work that was deplorable, I'd work... The question is not how the companies remove themselves from the country, but how to get them to act more responsibly, and at the same time, be internationally competitive. Because if they're not going to be competitive, they will cease to exist."

Levi's, adds Rosenbaum, "took a tremendous risk" by publicly announcing its guidelines. "It puts them miles ahead of 500 companies I could name... People are going to monitor the daylights out of them."

Are they? Are we? And in Bangladesh, what are the children learning at the Levi's school? Is that woman in the state hospital in San Antonio still screaming? And what about those other 500 companies? Capitalism may have, in fact, "won," but can "better" in such a case as Levi's truly be "good"? Balancing one awful alternative (layoffs; offshore sweatshops) with a merely bleak one (layoffs; ethical guidelines) may be pragmatic, but we will be in trouble if we allow this to become the end of history.

So, James. Whether or not we queers decide to buy Levi's, we'd better try these pants on one leg at a time.

Susie Day is a writer living in New York City. © Susie Day

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In *Salmonberries*, when Kotzebue snowmobiles across the blank Alaskan tundra with her beloved in tow, the soundtrack swelling with lang's gorgeous title track "Barefoot," or when she falls prone on a bed in a Berlin hotel room wrapped only in a skimpy robe, the movie can't help but reek of dyke iconography. Consequently, Roswitha's climactic rejection feels as stinging as if lang herself had been denied.

My favorite recent queer film, however, is Richard Glatzer's *Grief*, a dashing little number that blows puffed-up workplace dramas (*The Paper*, *Working Girl*) out of the water. For his first feature, writer-director Glatzer called on his five-year experience as a producer for TV's *Divorce Court*, and concocted an even cheesier fictional show dubbed *The Love Judge*. *Grief* tracks the soapy travails of the creative team behind all the trash—it's a gang after my own heart that includes a domineering mother hen (dragster extraordinaire Jackie Beat), a hunky gay writer (Carlton Wilborn), a nice sorta-straight punk boy (Alexis Arquette), a wildass secretary (Illeana Douglas) and a nerdy gay man, Mark (Craig Chester from *Swoon*), whose lover died of AIDS a year ago.

The film weaves the story of Mark's recovery from grief with the ongoing sagas of friendship/courtship that unravel amidst the daily toil of producing a television show. *Grief* is laugh-aloud funny and occasionally heartbreaking, a far cry from pious AIDS movies that try to fit the square peg of gayness into the round hole of mainstream America. Here, the kisses are tender and jokes familiar; at the end of

the movie, I wondered fleetingly if *The Love Judge* was hiring. Glatzer, a player on the L.A. nightclub scene, turns a fond camera on this city's seedier side—but *Grief* makes even the bowels of Hollywood seem poignant. The lust in *Grief*, as in *Salmonberries*, *Threesome*, *Go Fish* and other movies in the new new wave of queer cinema, is both aboveboard and mysterious. Which may no longer be news, but still has the power to shift consciousness.

Elizabeth Pincus is film editor of the LA Weekly. Her third novel, *The Hangdog Hustle*, will be published in February 1995.

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national television — seen by who knows how many. One of Ron Vawter's last performances was in Philadelphia (he played one of the evil straight lawyers harassing Tom Hanks.) It is a startling piece of acting, admired by all who see the movie. His death affects all of them as well as those theater cognoscenti who went out of their way to see his dual performance piece based on the lives of gay filmmaker Jack Smith and gay traitor Roy Cohn. Terry Helbing, one of the founders of contemporary gay theater in New York, influenced producers, playwrights, actors and designers. Through these people, his ideas, decisions and talents reached untold audiences: night after night, play after play Helbing's vision — and his hard work at promoting and constructing a cultural place for gay and lesbian theater — had an effect. Who knows how many men get hard-ons reading John Preston's fiction? Who knows how many men had their sexuality broadened by seeing Derek Jarman's *Sebastiane*, or their minds expanded by his Wittgenstein? When I read about Charles Ludlum's death in 1987, my immediate reaction was a piercing regret that I had never seen him perform on stage. When performance artist Ethyl Eichelberger died the next year, I had some solace in that I had seen him a number of times — that I had something, some memory, some pleasure, by which to remember him.

The other, obvious, loss is that we will have no future works by these men. Marlon Riggs was working on a project when he died — it will probably be released, but nothing more after that. Walta has enough unpublished poems for another book — but nothing more after that. Actors like Ron Vawter can leave performances on tape and film, the theatrical equivalent of a published book, or a directed film. But after that there is no more. It is impossible to conceive of a world in which we will have no new Derek Jarman film, no new Walta Borawski poem, no new story by John Preston. We are in the realm of the unimaginable here — you cannot imagine what is not going to be. Which is not to say that we will not experience it — we are now living in a world in which there will be no new film by Marlon Riggs, no new theatrical venture by Terry Helbing. But that is quite different than actively imagining what this world will be.

But the loss of an artist's potential future work is, in some ways, only part of that loss. Of equal importance is that dead artist's vision, not of the future, but of the past. Art of any sort does not exist in a vacuum. An artist is not only a producer of art, but a viewer of art as well. And one of the mighty functions of gay artists has been to reinterpret our shared history for us. On a long car ride, alone, from Manhattan I played cassette tapes of popular music from the early 1960s; music that influenced how Walta wrote, how he negotiated his emotions as a young gay man, music that helped him shape his view of gay life and

love. I tried to listen to it as Walta might have in 1963 — to hear what a lonely Long Island gay teenager heard when he first listened to Barbra Streisand in 1963. As hard as I tried I knew that it was simply what I was hearing, through my own personal and historical filters, not what Walta heard. But I also knew that what Walta heard was in his poetry, his journals, his music criticism. This is true of all artists — what they bring to us is their own experience, but it is also our history as well. Marlon Riggs's *Color Adjustment*, an examination of race in popular culture, tells us enormous amounts of Rigg's own experience of culture and racism. Derek Jarman's *Sebastiane* allows us to see how the filmmaker interpreted, reinterpreted and reinvented what he saw as "gay history" through the lens of what it was like to live as an openly gay man in 1970s Britain.

History is never stagnant. It is reinterpreted. It can always be viewed again, seen differently. This is particularly true of lesbian and gay history which has barely been discovered, never mind interpreted and reinterpreted. Like biblical exegesis or the ever unfolding revaluation of scripture, lesbian and gay histories are waiting for the artist to revisit them, display for us their new meanings, their resonance and intimations. The death of gay artists deprives us of their power to see and elucidate their history — our history — for us.

So many deaths from AIDS, so many missing artists, so many gaps in our vision — gaps in our lives are, of course, cumulative. How can we ascertain these losses and reckon them, add them up? When you begin to think about all of it — to really contemplate what this means, how it affects us, what, as Larry Kramer said, is going to happen to us? — the salient emotional response is fear. We may not acknowledge it immediately, we may not want to even admit it. But such loss engenders fear. Fear is nothing new to lesbian and gay life. We learn from an early age to be afraid. Afraid of being queer, afraid of being found out, afraid of being punished and, perhaps most of all — given the dire consequences which are associated with queerness — simply afraid of not being.

We talk a lot about death, what it means, what it is, what happens, how it affects us, how it affects our lives but the irrefutable bottom line is that death is, whatever else we might postulate about it, not being. There is no way that these seemingly endless AIDS deaths — all AIDS deaths, not just artists — reverberate this fear of not being in us. If the people we have learned, over the years, the decades, would help us see who we are, how we live — if they have entered into a state of not being then what about us? Where are we now? What is our loss? What is our fear?

The more you think about artists and AIDS and death and loss and fear and pain, the more confusing, the more entangled it all becomes. There is no easy way to speak about what we lose when gay artists die of AIDS — the cumulative sorrow and loss is beyond words, beyond exact ideas or thoughts. AIDS is not going to destroy gay cultures — the art that exists now will continue to exist, artists who are not dead will continue to create — but it will change the way we think and feel, view our lives and create our community. AIDS is, at this point in time, simply a fact of our lives. The constant deaths that result from it are also facts of our lives. The best we can do is to struggle through every day, every loss and hold onto the poems, the films, the art and the visions that have already sustained us and brought us to where we are now.

Michael Bronski is the author of *Culture Clash: The Making of Gay Sensibility* and the forthcoming *Gay and Lesbian Culture for Chelsea House*. He is a columnist for Z Magazine, Firsthand, and The Guide. His articles on culture, politics and sexuality have appeared in *Radical America*, *The Boston Globe*, *Fag Rag*, *The Village Voice*, *Steam* and *The Advocate*. He is the program coordinator for Outwrite '95 and has been involved in gay liberation for 25 years.

attended HAL and GLF's 1970 dances on the campuses of the University of Pennsylvania and Temple University. And to the extent that GLF-Philadelphia had a leader, that person was Kuromiya, a Japanese-American human rights activist.

Third, GLF-Philadelphia conceived of gay liberation as a male movement parallel to lesbian feminism, which had erupted with the May 1970 Lavender Menace zap at the Congress to Unite Women in New York. Influenced by lesbian feminism, GLF-Philadelphia identified sexism as the primary source of homophobia and gay oppression. These are the principles and practices that won applause when Kuromiya presented the demands of the "Male Homosexual Workshop" to the thousands of people gathered in Philadelphia for the Black Panther-sponsored Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention (RPC) in September 1970.

While the Stonewall riots have come to be regarded as the revolutionary moment that led to the gay liberation movement, much less attention has focused on the closest thing to a revolutionary moment that can be identified in the history of lesbian-feminism—the Lavender Menace zap in 1970. Lesbian feminism erupted in Philadelphia in the aftermath of the Panther convention. While the multiracial gay male liberationists were applauded at the RPC, the predominantly white Lesbian Workshop walked out of the Convention, angry at a series of incidents they perceived as sexist and the Panthers perceived as racist. Several months later, in early 1971, male members of GLF-Philadelphia helped an isolated lesbian member form RL-Philadelphia. While predominantly white, RL-Philadelphia provided an environment in which Anita Cornwell produced the essays that would later form *Black Lesbian in White America* (1983), a vital early expression of African-American lesbian feminism.

The 25th anniversary of Stonewall offers lesbians and gay men, and all those interested in historical and present-day lesbian and gay life, an opportunity to explore not only a particular event that occurred in one time and place, but a long series of developments in a variety of locations that have shaped the world in which we now live. Such histories honor the movement-building work of lesbians and gay men before and after Stonewall, reveal the myth-making process that turned the riots into a revolution, and provide us with new lessons from the past as we continue to struggle today.

Marc Stein is a former coordinating editor of *GCN* and is finishing his doctorate in history at the University of Pennsylvania with a project entitled "The City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: The Making of Lesbian and Gay Communities in Greater Philadelphia, 1956-76." For more about his work, see the current issue of *The Radical History Review*. If you have a "Philadelphia story" to share, contact him at the University of Pennsylvania, Department of History, 207 College Hall, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6379.

Vaid on Queer Status Quo continued from page 17

Challenging Bias Within Our Movement

We live in a moment when racism, sexism and chauvinism are resurgent in the gay and lesbian movement and in our lives, in communities across the country. It was only a matter of time before the backlash — against feminism, diversity politics, multiculturalism call it what you will — caught up with our movement. Only a matter of time before the age-old argument resurfaced that: we cannot get any farther in the "public relations" war without dealing with our "image." But I find myself in despair at the acquiescence of so many of us to these retrograde and discredited ideas.

Examples abound:

- Has anyone read *Christopher Street* lately, the anxiety and misogyny of the male writers read as if it's the 1970s; the flip side is true too, a lot of lesbians are in a knee-jerk anger at gay men over the "privileges" they have won due to AIDS.
- Not one week goes by in gay and lesbian newspapers across the country without people arguing that we need to make an alliance with the African-American community because the extremist Christian Right

In conclusion, what lies beyond for our movement was anticipated by Justice Blackmun in his dissent to *Bowers v. Hardwick*. He wrote: "Freedom to differ is not limited to things that do not matter much. That would be a mere shadow of freedom. The test of its substance is the right to differ as to things that touch the heart of the existing order."

Lesbians and gay men touch the heart of the existing order — we threaten the very order of human sexuality, family structure, racial separation, and gender orthodoxy.

The gay and lesbian liberation movement has turned into a gay and lesbian marketing movement.

is effectively dividing us from people we can be allied with. These same papers are filled with calls that gay people need to focus on gay issues only. The contradiction between building coalitions with non-gay black people and not dealing with race as a movement is never addressed. The argument that we must build a coalition is in fact made in the narrowest of terms: it's a matter of self-interest, white gay men tell each other, not a matter of justice, that we should join in alliance with the traditional civil rights movement. The reality that there are gay and lesbian people of color in our communities who have been pushing for such an alliance to be made on deeper levels, and pushing our movement to commit to racial justice on a moral level, is largely ignored or tokenized in this gay media conversation. On a political and cultural level as well, the backlash we are facing is tied to the backlash against race and gender equality — the same enemy behind the white hood. Even our new assimilation into capital's mainstream differs little from the cultural assimilation of women's liberation into *you've come a long way baby* marketing or of Black power and pride into stereotypical TV sit-coms and the commoditized anger of Rap.

The fact is, as my friend Michael Bronski said to me recently, we have made a very shallow critique of the repression of race, gender and sexuality, and of their intersection, if two decades of organizing and analysis can be effectively levelled by a two-word epithet: political correctness. They destroyed our analysis with a sneer and a joke, Bronski says, and he is right. It was not a strong analysis to begin with. We need a tougher analysis. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. urges us to look beyond identity politics to a politics of identification, or as I have phrased it before, beyond demanding one of each at the table to understanding and acting as if we have the interests of each in one, in us.

This new frame requires of us a new dedication to questioning and challenging the racism so prevalent in gay and lesbian communities, newspapers and social settings. It requires of us a renewed dedication to pointing out the misogyny of so much popular culture (anyone seen the movie *Threesome* lately?). Against the coming out of a racist, sexist gay and lesbian Right, we need a risky full-scale, frontal assault: call them on it, name it, risk being called all sorts of names. Too many people worked too hard to get our movement to admit the existence of racial prejudice and gender inequality, to force the movement to represent and take care of all aspects of our communities. I refuse to concede an inch of the ground we gained.

The challenge for our movement is to return to a task we began sometime ago. Now that we have created some more space in which to live, let us resume the task of defining the difference we represent — not in order to appease the "straight-middle-electorate" but in order to develop a gay and lesbian moral vision of the future. In order to define what it is that we as a people stand for — something beyond the marketing of our sexual orientation like it's just another sneaker or ice cream flavor or commodity.

Urvashi Vaid is a community organizer and former director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Her book titled *Margin To Center: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation* will be published by Anchor/Doubleday Books in 1995.

Jee Yeun Lee continued from Page 17

network creates the opportunity to bring together the issues and concerns of APL&Bs all over the nation. APLBN seeks to act as a resource and clearinghouse that can organize APL&B gatherings, provide information about different activities, coordinate projects initiated by regional groups and individuals, and work on APL&B visibility and education.

Challenging Our Communities

APL&B visibility has been a major concern from the beginning — we want to make our presence felt in the arenas that concern us, especially Asian/Pacific American issues and queer issues. APLBN can facilitate projects to educate all of our communities and keep them on their toes about issues of inclusion and accountability. In the NYC queer community, independent regional action taken by Asian Lesbians Of the East Coast helped spearhead the protest against Lambda Legal Defense's use of *Miss Saigon* as a fundraiser in 1991. In a challenge to the Asian/Pacific communities, Asian Pacifica Sisters in San Francisco marched in this year's Chinese New Year parade for the first time ever, without any of the controversy surrounding the St. Patrick's Day parade in New York. APLBN can support and coordinate actions like these by sharing information and strategies with various regional groups and individuals. Other visibility projects might be in video, film, writing, art, and performance: APLBN could not only facilitate but also eventually fund such projects in the interest of getting more APL&B issues and opinions out there.

Many people would also like to see APLBN work in coalition with other activist groups. Some examples of these are: fighting the anti-immigration backlash; addressing lesbian health issues; supporting the boycott of Jessica McClintock in solidarity with Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA) and the 12 Chinese garment workers denied back wages; supporting the movement for Hawaiian sovereignty; and building ties with other lesbian of color and queer people of color groups. With issue-oriented task forces, APLBN can hook up people from all over the nation who want to work on similar concerns. V.K. Aruna, another founder of the network, states: "I think the network is really an umbrella organization that serves to facilitate the work of many different groups. Those groups can be local groups within a city, or they could be task forces, and I'm recommending that task forces can be either issue-based or identity-based; that way, people who want to come together on identity, for example South Asians, can do it, and people who want to organize across identity and work on issues, such as hate violence, can come together too."

Confronting Our Own Diversity

Another basic goal of APLBN has been to break the isolation that many of us feel. As Li Voon Ng, an organizer in St. Paul, Minnesota, states: "I think that especially for us in the Midwest, with such small numbers, it really really helps to know that there are other APL&Bs out there, and know that through APLBN we can connect." Thus a major part of APLBN activity has been organizing retreats, like the first national retreat in 1989 and a west coast retreat in 1993, both held in Santa Cruz, California. At the 1989 retreat, nearly 200 APL&Bs came from all over the United States, as well as from Canada and England. Many women felt they were coming home for the first time, a home where they could be whole, integrating the various dimensions of their identities.

Yet coming together is not an easy or natural task. Since APL&Bs are not a monolithic entity, we deal with all the various tensions and dynamics inherent to a diverse political grouping. This was made clear at the 1989 retreat. People confronted each other on issues of inclusion and outreach, feeling that there was an implicit center of Asian Pacific lesbian experience in relation to which they were marginalized. Participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of attention paid to issues of class, ethnic diversity, Pacific Islander concerns, bisexuality, immigrant experiences, and differently abled people. In particular, South Asian women felt invisible and that their issues were marginal throughout the retreat. They raised their challenge at the final plenary session.

The issue of marginalization arose once more at the 1993 west coast retreat, where women of native Hawaiian descent and some Asian American allies confronted the retreat participants and urged APLN to either address Pacific Islander issues concretely or end the pretense of being inclusive. In addition, bisexual women requested their inclusion in the name of the group, a request which was approved unanimously.

Thus another part of APLBN's goal is to work on issues among APL&Bs, such as educating ourselves about our differences, discussing what our common concerns really are, thinking of better ways to be accountable to all APL&Bs, and improving on how we work together as a coalition. These issues are complex, and it's important to the organizers to not gloss over these difficult questions: how can we ensure that the organizers of APLBN and the decisions made will reflect the diversity of the APL&B community? How can we address the specific issues

that our myriad contingents bring? How can we not marginalize immigrants and immigrant issues when so many of us are second generation and only English-speaking? What would it mean to concretely address Pacific Islander concerns? How can we be sensitive to the issues and needs of those who are differently abled or chronically ill? Those who are working-class or working poor? The organizers feel that discussing these issues and building them into the organizing process from the very beginning can only make APLBN stronger. June Chan, another founder of the network, states: "I like the fact that we have a really strong political focus; ... we are actually about social change and promoting a progressive agenda. So people who come to this group understand it's about empowerment but in a progressive way."

At this point, APLBN is still in the beginning stages of organizing; we have many ideas, but we are working with limited resources. For instance, we lack the time and the people to do extensive outreach; we spend a lot of time worrying about money and planning various fundraising schemes; we often find it difficult to coordinate tasks and communicate with each other when we are scattered all around the country. Despite these limitations though, we are working hard to build APLBN into something that can serve the needs of the APL&B community and will hopefully be around for a while. Some of the projects we are working on now are: planning our second national retreat in 1995, organizing events around Stonewall (see box with events), fundraising, establishing a firmer structure and decision-making process, and reaching out to involve APL&Bs all over the nation. Our small community is growing: with over 1000 names on our mailing list, we feel it is imperative to make APLBN a viable resource that APL&Bs can turn to, that can focus on the needs and issues of APL&Bs. Hopefully, APLBN can act as a vehicle for all APL&B voices and opinions to have an impact, both within the community and outside of it.

Jee Yean Lee is a graduate student in Ethnic Studies at UC-Berkeley.

If you want to know more about APLBN and find out what's happening in your part of town, write P.O. Box 460778, San Francisco, CA 94146-0778 or call (510) 814-2422. At Stonewall on Sunday June 26, 1994, we will be marching with the NY People of Color Coalition in the people of color contingent. For more information about these events, call (212) 517-5598 or Aruna at (301) 589-4462. As a fundraiser, APLBN is also selling housing spaces at FIT dorms from June 22 to 27, open to all women. For information and registration forms, call (510) 834-3819.

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Human Rights Watch Takes on HIV

A report issued this spring by Human Rights Watch is considered a breakthrough in efforts to convince mainstream human rights organizations to take HIV infection seriously. The report documents the link between forced prostitution of Burmese women and girls in Thailand and exposure to HIV.

According to the report, the women's exposure to HIV is a direct result of their status as bonded labor and consequent inability to choose clients or negotiate the terms of sex. Further abuses have included mandatory testing of the women and girls by public officials and public distribution of test results, as well as forced repatriation.

Human Rights Watch is also currently considering a policy on sexual orientation. If adopted, the group would be the second major mainstream human rights organization—after Amnesty International—to formally work on behalf of lesbians and gay men.

Copies of the HIV report, "A Modern Form of Slavery," are available from Human Rights Watch, 485 Fifth Ave., NY NY 10017, for \$18.

Information for International Shorts comes from the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, a project of the International Lesbian and Gay Association. IGLHRC can be reached at 1360 Mission St. Suite 200; San Francisco, CA 94103, 415-255-8680.

Eric Rofus continued from page 21

needlessly ridiculed and trashed in our own community-based media. Our most vicious and intentionally wounding critics aren't our enemies and aren't our parents — they are our own people.

And why? Because the easiest person for some of us to hate is a queer. The easiest person to feel disgust for is the gay elected official. The easiest person to criticize is the lesbian who runs the health clinic. The recurrent messages we've heard throughout our lives that we are sick and immoral — that we are sissies — are lodged in our brains and we act the bully role with each other.

We fought the good fight over six months to get the military ban lifted. Already people are maneuvering on the national level to see who will take the fall for Clinton's betrayal. Whom do we blame? David Mixner? Tom Stoddard? Tim McFeeley? Torie Osborn? Barney Frank? Personal attacks on our leadership and calls to shut down our national groups followed. Instead of a reasoned review of our extraordinary efforts and a balanced critique of our failings, the hounds are already our sniffing for blood. We do Sam Nunn's work for him.

What is needed to move beyond community cannibalism? How do we as a community get beyond the bully/sissy paradigm?

We must recall and reread Audre Lorde's essay, "The Master's Tools will Never Dismantle the Master's House." We cannot create a world of freedom by simply changing roles from sissy to bully. What is needed is a powerful shift into the moral vision which is the core of true social change movements. There is room for criticism, room for frustration, room for rage. But our larger vision must be fueled by tolerance, respect and ethics. We ask nothing more from our enemies. We should demand nothing less from ourselves.

Eric Rofus is an author and community organizer.



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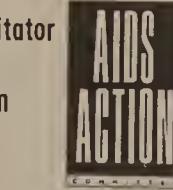
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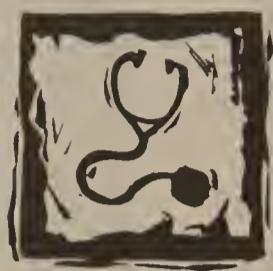
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